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# **The Common Good in the Theology of John Calvin**

**by**

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**Doctor of Philosophy**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, and that the work contained therein is my own, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Name..... Date.....



**DEDICATED**

**To**

My beloved friends,

Elder Brian Seung Koo Chang and his wife Elder Young Shil Chang

for their support and encouragement

and above all

for their love

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of my thesis is to explore Calvin's understanding of the term 'the common good' (*commune bonum, bien commun*): its theological grounding within his works, and its role as an inspiration for both ecclesial and social application. I seek to illustrate how his notion of the common good is constructed theologically (part A) and practically (part B). Although Calvin's notion of the common good has been partly dealt with by numerous scholars (mainly from a variety of socio-economic perspectives), there has been no comprehensive or systematic study to illustrate its theological significance and its doctrinal context. The aim of this study is to illuminate the wide-ranging and consistent thought on the common good discernable within Calvin's works; it is hoped that this in-depth study of the topic will be a valuable addition to Calvin scholarship.

The structure of Part A reflects how Calvin's three theological foundations - God's image, sanctification, and Law - are shaped dynamically through the three stages of humankind's salvation - before the Fall, after the Fall, and in Christ's redemption. Chapters Two - Four show how these theological foundations operate towards the restoration of God's original order designed for the common good in the correlation between the two fields of church and humankind, both at the divine and moral level and the spiritual and social level. In addition, the willingness and mutuality which constitute the cornerstone of Christ's redemption are decisive in the realization of the common good. Chapter Two argues, first, that Calvin's notion of the common good, drawn from his doctrine of God's image, is shaped by the threefold dimension of that image - the relational, substantial, and communal. For the restoration of the original order in God's creation, the universal love of humankind based upon the surviving substantial-communal image of God in humanity plays a limited part; however, the Christian's sanctified universal love based upon the restored relational-communal image of God in Christ plays a pivotal role. With relation to the restored image in Christ, Chapter Three shows that the most essential element of sanctified life for participating in the divine economy for the common good within the Trinitarian mode is Christian self-denial; that is, the composition of the present life designed for eternal life through the multiple sub-analyses of Christ's example, consecration, humility, and stewardship. Chapter Four shows how Calvin's integrated legalistic approach, in terms of the common good, can help us to explore another facet of his multiple understanding of God's image in humanity with regards to both ecclesial and social life. For Calvin, the three uses or functions of the Law can be regarded as both distinctively and inseparably incorporated into work for the common good of all people. In relation to the Law in Christ, Christian freedom can be analyzed

from pedagogical, responsive, and pastoral perspectives in terms of the life for the common good. As the Decalogue is a spiritual-moral space within the mutual function of the third use and second use of the Law, Calvin's understanding of the two tablets demonstrates how his interpretation of both divine and natural law in terms of the common good can be co-embodied in the right relation between God and humanity and amongst people.

With the above theological background in mind, Part B of this thesis, through Chapters Five and Six, continues to elucidate how, for Calvin, the notion of 'the common good' reveals its value when it is established within the divine system of voluntary gift-giving, where it can engage with the mutual relation of the common good of the church and the common good of humankind. Calvin's discussion of the above theological foundations of the common good plays a vital role in the formation of its application both at ecclesial and social levels: the common good of the church (*commune ecclesiae bonum*) is actualized when the gifts of the Spirit given to believers in union with Christ are shared mutually, in a way which reflects the restoration of God's image in believers - through prayer, sacrament, office, and property through the third use of the Law. The common good of humankind (*publicum generis humani bonum*) is actualized when the common grace given to humanity is exchanged and shared mutually through politics, economics, and social welfare, through the interplay between the third and second use of the Law.

This thesis concludes that, although the ecclesial and social common good are cooperative in a distinctive but inseparable way, the former takes priority over the latter for the current and consummative restoration of the original order both at divine and moral levels.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

When we begin any new endeavour in life we may plan the route but the way itself has a mysterious power to take us in directions we never imagined. My doctoral journey is no exception. As I finished the final lap, I came to realize that Jesus Christ, as The Way, had guided me towards this destination. The Lord sent His people to this way as an accompaniment, because these people helped me realize this way is a gift from our gracious God.

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Above all, all these people are gifts of grace from God, so Praise the Lord!

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

### **PRIMARY TEXTS**

CO     *Johannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, eds. Wilhelm Baum, Edward Cunitz, and Edward Reutz, P. Lobstein, 59 vols. *Corpus Reformationum* (CR) 29-98 (Brunswick and Berlin: C.A. Schweiske, 1863-1900)

Comm. mainly refers to the edition of the Calvin Translation Society (Calvin's Commentaries, various trans. 22 vols. Edinburgh: Calvin Trans Society (CTS), 1843-56; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005); Calvin's *New Testament Commentaries* (CNTC). 12 Vols. ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960.

*Inst*     John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles and others, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), which is a translation of the 1536 *Institutio*.

*LW*     Martin, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia, and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955)

OS     *Ioannis Calvini Opera Selecta*, ed. Peter Barth and Wilhelm Niesel, 5 vols, (Munich: Kaiser, 1928)

### **JOURNALS**

*AHR*                     *The American Historical Review*

*AR*                        *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*

*BS*                        *Bibliotheca Sacra*

*BSHPF*                   *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme français*

*CH*                        *Church History*

<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>EA</i>	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ER</i>	<i>The Ecumenical Review</i>
<i>FT</i>	<i>First Things</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of The Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JRE</i>	<i>Journal of Religious Ethics</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Modern Theology</i>
<i>PRTJ</i>	<i>Protestant Reformed Theological Journal</i>
<i>PTR</i>	<i>Pacific Theological Review</i>
<i>RJ</i>	<i>Reformed Journal</i>
<i>RR</i>	<i>Reformed Review</i>

<i>SBET</i>	<i>Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology</i>
<i>SCJ</i>	<i>The Sixteenth Century Journal</i>
<i>SHE</i>	<i>St Hist Eccl</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Social Progress</i>
<i>SRTH</i>	<i>Studies in Reformed Theology and History</i>
<i>TC</i>	<i>Theologies and Cultures</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theology in Scotland</i>
<i>TT</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>WPT</i>	<i>Western Political Thought</i>
<i>YJT</i>	<i>Yonsei Journal of Theology</i>



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Today's globalized world is conflicted by the increasing gap between rich and poor, undermined human rights, religious and cultural collisions, energy depletion, and environmental pollution. As a result, humankind has been turning its attention more to the value of the common good than in any previous era. Within this modern trend, the theme of the common good has also been highlighted in Christian theology.<sup>1</sup>

However, the term 'the common good (*commune bonum*)', though defined in dictionaries as 'the benefit or interests of all' or 'the good of all',<sup>2</sup> is difficult to delineate because it is used in a wide variety of contexts. In contemporary debate, this notion is closely linked with several themes: the quantitative and utilitarian term 'general welfare', defined as the aggregate sum of 'the economic welfare of the individual members of the society', as in the Gross National Product; the qualitative and disaggregative term 'the public interest', defined as 'the modern commitment to the fundamental dignity, and rights of all persons'; the 'extrinsic' and external term 'public goods', defined as 'non-excludable' and 'non-rivalrous in consumption'. This last idea is understood as a partial

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<sup>1</sup> Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989); Gary I. Dorrien, *Reconstructing the Common Good: Theology and the Social Order*, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1990); Eric Mount Jr., *Covenant, Community, and the Common Good: An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1999); Charles E. Gutenson, *Christians and the Common Good: How Faith Intersects with Public Life*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2001); David Hollenbach, S.J., *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Dennis P. McCann and Patrick D. Miller, ed. *In Search of the Common Good*, (New York, London: T&T Clark International, 2005); Eoin G. Cassidy, ed., *The Common Good in an Unequal World: Reflections on the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2004); David Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Kamran Mofid and Marcus Braybrooke, *Promoting the Common Good: Bringing Economics and Theology Together Again*, (London: Shephard-Walwyn Publishers LTD, 2005); Walter Bruggemann, *Journey to the Common Good*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010); T. J. Gorringer, *The Common Good and the Global Emergency: God and the Built Environment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*, (Brazos Press, 2011); Ronald J. Sider's work shows that conflict by uneven distribution is not only a socio-economic issue between the western and non-western world but also is a practical issue between rich Christians in high-income countries and poor Christians and non-Christians in low-income countries: *Rich Christians in An Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005).

revitalization of the classical term. In classical texts the term, ‘the common good’, in its ontological and relational dimensions, is defined as being of the community or its mutual bond of affection in the community, and also ‘reducible neither to the interests of the collective nor to an aggregate of individual interests’.<sup>3</sup> This classical sense is found in the historical concepts of Aristotle and Aquinas.<sup>4</sup>

As Hollenbach observes, classical echoes of the common good have long been present in political, philosophical, and theological debates within Western thought, especially in the works of Aristotle, Aquinas, and Loyola.<sup>5</sup> First of all, as Hollenbach notes, for Aristotle, humanity’s good life should be ‘oriented to goods shared with others – the common good of larger society of which one is part’, and therefore, both a single person’s good life and the quality of the common life are closely linked with each other.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, it is manifest that Aristotle’s notion of the common good can be understood not only at a humanistic noble level but also at a more religious divine level.<sup>7</sup> The religious dimension of the common good in Aristotle casts a decisive influence on Aquinas’ discussion of ‘the primacy of the common good in the moral life’ in his *Summa Contra Gentiles* and (*Summa Theologica*).<sup>8</sup> As Hollenbach clarifies, for Aquinas, the concept of the common good as ‘what all desire’<sup>9</sup> occupies a central position in the Christian life in a way that not only correlates ‘the good of each person’ with ‘the good shared with others in the community’ but also identifies ‘the highest good common to the life of all’ with

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<sup>2</sup> See *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, Revised, (Oxford University Press, 2005), p.348; *The Chambers Dictionary*, (Chambers Harrap Publishers, 2003), p.308.

<sup>3</sup> Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society*, p.32.

<sup>4</sup> See Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, pp.7-9; On the common good in Aristotle and Aquinas, see Mary M. Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Susanne M. DeCrane, *Aquinas, Feminism, and the Common Good*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004); Dennis P. McCann and Patrick D. Miller, ed. *In Search of the Common Good*, p.94-120; Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society*, pp.31-36.

<sup>5</sup> Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p.3, see also Fergusson’s sketch on the common good in the Middle Ages, *Church, State and Civil Society*, pp.31-36.

<sup>6</sup> Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p.3.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. and ed. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), book I, chapter 2, 1094b: ‘For even if the good is the same for an individual as for a city, that of the city is obviously a greater and more complete thing to obtain and preserve. For while the good of an individual is a desirable thing, what is good for a people or for cities is a nobler and more godlike thing’ (p.4).

<sup>8</sup> Hollenbach, 4. Aquinas follows Aristotle’s proposition, that ‘the whole is of necessity prior to the part’, See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 5 Vols, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1948), 2a 2ae, q. 104, a.1.

‘God’s own self’.<sup>10</sup> For Aquinas, the concept of the common good can be fully understood only when it is related both to the public dimension of the good of all people and to the religious dimension of God as the supreme good for all people: ‘the supreme good, namely God, is the common good, since the good of all things depends on God’.<sup>11</sup> Taking a step further, Ignatius Loyola and his Jesuit followers associated their activities for ‘the terrestrial reality of the common good’ with their religious vision of ‘God’s glory’. Also, for Loyola, the Jesuits’ activities included not only religious ministries such as ‘the defense and propagation’ of Catholic faith but also secular tasks such as ‘the education of youth’ and social help for the outsiders with a universal vision.<sup>12</sup> Regardless of their apparent minor differences, one can say that Aristotle, Aquinas and Loyola all had a concern for the common good which had theological and moral (practical) dimensions.

How, then, was the common good understood by John Calvin, the great Reformed theologian? Is the concept of the common good given voice in Calvin’s writings? With regard to the four aspects of the common good listed above, how can one define and unfold Calvin’s ideas on the common good? For Calvin, the topic of the common good was central, both theologically and practically. Calvin’s earliest work, his *Commentary on Seneca’s De Clementia* in 1532, shows that he already has a classical and humanistic understanding of the common good. Moreover, Calvin’s preface to his first commentary on Romans in 1540 shows that the motivation for his Christian writing is ‘to promote the public good of the Church’.<sup>13</sup> On April 28, 1564, during the last moments of life, Calvin confessed that he had always studied and consulted for ‘the public good’ to the best of his ability, and requested the political leaders of the civil governments of Geneva to live their lives for the public good with the help of excellent and superior gifts from God.<sup>14</sup> The fact that one can see an interest in the common good at both the beginning and end of Calvin’s

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<sup>9</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2a 2ae, q. 104, a.1.

<sup>10</sup> See Hollenbach, p.4.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, 17, quoted by Hollenbach, p.4.

<sup>12</sup> Hollenbach, p.5.

<sup>13</sup> *Calvin’s Commentary on Seneca’s De Clementia*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles and André Malan Hugo, (Leiden, Netherlands: the Renaissance Society of America, 1969), pp.77-113; The Preface to *Comm. Romans*. xxv-xxvi.

<sup>14</sup> See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 8, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1892), pp.831-33, from Beza’s *Vita Calvini*, the Latin text in CO 21: 164, the French text in CO 9:887-890, trans. Henry Beveridge, Calvin’s *Tracts*, vol. 1, 1844.

public career suggests that an investigation into his thought on the common good would be worthwhile.

Before the question of how Calvin's thoughts on the common good developed throughout his writings, it will be useful to inquire into the most recent discussions on Calvin's common good. As Ulrich Duchrow notes, the WARC (World Alliance of Reformed Churches) has been laying the groundwork by viewing 'economy as a central issue in the conciliar process of mutual commitment for justice, peace and the integrity of creation'. In its Accra Confession of 2004, the WARC defined today's mission of the Church against 'neo-liberal imperial capitalism' through key articles 18 and 19:

We believe that God is sovereign over all creation. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. (Psalm 24.1)...Therefore, we reject the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism...We reject any claim of economic, political, and military empire which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule.<sup>15</sup>

Duchrow judges that the Accra Confession can be regarded as a positive modern reflection of Calvin's original theology and praxis for both the Reformed Churches and the ecumenical movement.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Ulrich H. J. Körtner stresses that the Accra Confession can be understood as a historical declaration of 'God's economy' or on 'economy of grace' for the poor and marginalized against today's imperial tendency of powerful nations to protect and defend their own economic, cultural, political, and military interests.<sup>17</sup>

In response to this Confession, an international consultation was held in Geneva, 2004, on 'the impact of Calvin's Economic and Social Thought on Reformed Witness'. The final statement, drafted by Elsie McKee and delivered by convenor Edouard Dommen, shows clearly how contemporary scholars, pastors, and laypersons have begun to review Calvin with a new and timely focus on the common good:

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<sup>15</sup> Ulrich Duchrow's "Calvin's Understanding of Society and Economy", p.95, *TC* 6.2 (2009), pp.58-97; quotation from p.59.

<sup>16</sup> Duchrow, p.94.

<sup>17</sup> Ulrich H. J. Körtner, "Calvinism and Capitalism", in *John Calvin's Impact on Church and Society, 1509-2009*, ed. Martin Ernst Hirzel and Martin Sallman (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), pp.160-61.

Calvin was absolutely convinced that...material things are not personal possessions but means to serve the common good; individual talents of mind or physical skill or artistic creation find their right purpose in mutual support within the whole society.<sup>18</sup>

This consultation stressed that Calvin's real portrait can be found, not in the old and misrepresented image of 'the father of capitalism', but in seemingly new yet actually rediscovered themes in Calvin which may contribute to today's social and economic efforts toward 'liberation, justice and the common good'. Anticipating the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Calvin's birth in 2009, this consultation urged all Christians to reconsider whether Calvin's 'biblical vision of the spiritual and practical coherence of God's world' could be a reliable insight for today's economic and social issues. The consultation concluded:

Calvin was deeply and personally convinced that stewardship of all earthly gifts for the common good and justice and love in all human relationships, are not optional for any human being.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, whilst both responding to WARC's Accra Confession and celebrating Calvin's 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Federation of Swiss Reformed Churches also attempted to bring to light Calvin's ethical approach as a prophetic call for a socially and environmentally responsible economy, as clearly declared in its position paper 'Globalance' aiming at 'globalization with a human face'.<sup>20</sup> Such recent trends therefore show how Calvin and his thoughts on the common good have come into the spotlight as

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<sup>18</sup> Edouard Dommen, "The Protestant Ethic Ought to Speak Better English", *Finance & The Common Good / Bien Commun* – Spring 2005; Perspectives – An online publication of the Office of the General Assembly, PCUSA, "on Calvin and Economic Justice", May, 2005. Dommen's statement can be supported by Calvin's sermons on the book of Job, Ch 1, see CO 33:31, 'God has asked us all to put all our skills to the common good of all [*qu'un chacun advise d'employer toutes ses facultez au bien commun de tous*]. This should be our attitude towards both God and men in order that our life be in good order'. [My translation.]

<sup>19</sup> Dommen, "The Protestant Ethic Ought to Speak Better English".

<sup>20</sup> Christoph Stückelberger, "Calvin, Calvinism, and Capitalism", in *John Calvin Rediscovered: The Impact of His Social and Economic Thought*, ed. Edward Dommen and James D. Bratt (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), pp.128, 130-1. Regarding the environmental aspect of Calvin's social thought, see McKim's statement on Calvin's notion of *via media*, as a balanced middle attitude toward this world; see also Edward Dommen's statement on the modern concept of sustainable development implied by Calvin's interpretation of manna. See McKim, "John Calvin: A Theologian for an Age of Limits", in *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), pp.292-98; Dommen, "Calvin and the Environment: Calvin's Views Examined through the Prism of Present-Day Concerns, and Especially of Sustainable Development", in *John Calvin Rediscovered*, pp.4-66.

Christians endeavour to find a new or better way to deal with today's global socio-economic issues.

Here, attention should be drawn to the fact that the historical debate regarding the socio-political nature of Calvin's thought has provided an opportunity for the notion of the common good to come to the forefront. First, Max Weber argued for a direct correlation between Calvinism and modern capitalism. Weber maintained that Calvinists' recognition of their secular jobs as a divine calling, driven by 'the inner isolation of the individual' because of the doctrine of predestination, became a decisive contribution to the development of both individual and rationalized capitalism.<sup>21</sup> However, in an important recent study, André Biéler has criticized Weber's thesis, saying that although it may be an accurate analysis in relation to 'the primary role of the doctrine of Predestination' in the Calvinism of the eighteenth century, this doctrine of predestination does not take 'a preponderant place' in Calvin's mind or within the early Calvinism of the sixteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Alister McGrath has also stressed that the formation of capitalism in Geneva had occurred before Calvin's time. Thus, McGrath disagreed with the inevitability of the link between Calvinism and capitalism whilst suggesting that one should turn attention to both the indirect and accidental impact of Calvin's religious ideas on the rapid socio-economic changes taking place within Geneva at the time of Reformation.<sup>23</sup> On this point, Stanford Reid has suggested that Calvin was fully aware of the new character of the economic structure formed around the emerging urban middle class, and incorporated this new character within his biblical teaching.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, Reid also argued that Weber's

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<sup>21</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pp.56-80; André Biéler, *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, trans. Paul T. Fuhrmann (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1964), p.59. For arguments which follow Weber, see also Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 Vols. trans. Olive Wyon, (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), (German edition, *Die Soziallehre der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, Tübingen, 1912); R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, (London, 1926); Werner Sombart, *The Quintessence of Capitalism*, (New York, 1915); Frank. M. Hnik, "The Theological Consequences of the Theological Systems of John Calvin", in *the Philanthropic Motive in Christianity*, (Oxford, 1938); A. Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Sociology*, (London, 1971); Gordon Marshall, *Presbyteries and Profits: Calvinism and the development of Capitalism in Scotland, 1560-1707*, (Oxford, 1980); *In search of the Spirit of Capitalism: Max Weber and the Protestant Ethical Thesis*, (London: 1982).

<sup>22</sup> Biéler, *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, pp.60-61.

<sup>23</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1990), pp.225-230.

<sup>24</sup> Stanford Reid, "John Calvin, Early Critic of Capitalism (1)", in R.C. Gamble, *Calvin's thought*, pp.161-63.

statement is only an analysis of the later outcome of Calvin's teaching; Calvin cannot be regarded as the father of capitalism.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, Dermange has stressed that Calvin's ethic of property, based on the duties of the wealthy, enables them to invest their capital in industries so that 'reformed language about the responsibility of the wealthy paradoxically turned out to have an affinity with capitalism'.<sup>26</sup> Troeltsch, in spite of his partial agreement with Weber,<sup>27</sup> critically disputed that 'capitalism derives from Calvinism',<sup>28</sup> and argued that Calvin's balance between individualism and holy congregation had the same tendency as 'Christian Socialism' – to use the profit of labour for the public good of the whole society, rather than for the individual's private good.<sup>29</sup> Bouwsma has stressed that Calvin did not attempt to understand the believer's life in the sense of the inner and isolated mind of the individual, but focused (like the Stoics) on the communal mind, aiming at the primacy of the common interest over individualism both at the functional and spiritual level.<sup>30</sup> Also, Körtner has maintained that 'the well-being of the community' rather than 'the egocentric happiness of each individual' should be placed 'at the centre of the Calvinist social doctrine'.<sup>31</sup> The more one looks at critiques of the link between Weber's individual and capitalistic viewpoint on Calvinism and Calvin's original thought, the more one's attention is turned to the key concepts of Calvin's socio-economic thought, including his thought on the common good.<sup>32</sup>

What, then, are the subjects regarding the common good contained in Calvin's socio-economic thought? First, Biéler has stressed how Calvin's notion of 'God's economic

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<sup>25</sup> Stanford Reid, "John Calvin: the father of capitalism?", *Themelios*, 8.2 January (1983), pp.19-25.

<sup>26</sup> François Dermange, "Calvin's View of Property", in *John Calvin Rediscovered*, p.51.

<sup>27</sup> Stanford Reid, "John Calvin: the father of capitalism?", *Themelios*, 8.2 January (1983), pp.19-25; André Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, ed. Edward Dommen, trans. James Greig (Geneva, Switzerland: WARC & WCC, 2005), pp.423-43, original French title: *La pensée économique et sociale de Calvin*, (Geneva: Georg, 1961).

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Busch, p.69.

<sup>29</sup> Busch, p.69. See Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, pp.617-625.

<sup>30</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.202.

<sup>31</sup> Körtner, "Calvinism and Capitalism", pp.170-71.

<sup>32</sup> As to what is missing in Weber's individual perspective on vocation 'as a means of proving one's salvation', Ray Pennings introduces 'the common good'-weighted perspective on vocation 'out of gratitude for the deliverance provided in Christ', which is taught by William Perkin and other influential Puritans. See Ray Pennings, "Working for God's Glory", in *Living for God's Glory*, Joel Beeke, (Orlando, Florida: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008), pp.350-57.

order, a fair share of benefits for all' is activated in 'economic solidarity' enabled by 'the new solidarity Jesus Christ establishes among men and women'.<sup>33</sup> This divine economic order is understood as the third way between individualism and communalism, and is realized by a consistent balance between the state's safeguarding and limiting of property.<sup>34</sup> Graham has drawn Calvin's portrait as 'a pragmatist in search of the common good of society' by highlighting Calvin's attempt to harmonize both the individual and communal dimensions of property.<sup>35</sup> Wallace has clarified that, in Calvin's mind, what contributed to 'the common interest' was not the spirit of capitalism to seek 'a competitive society', which may destroy both 'individual and social good', but rather the voluntary spirit of philanthropy with limited competition.<sup>36</sup> McKim has made clear that, in Calvin's social teaching, one can find plenty of decisive insights about believers' responsibilities 'as God's people living in an age of limits', that is, in 'the area of world peace, elimination of hunger, justice, energy controls, and simpler lifestyles'.<sup>37</sup>

These statements on the communal aspect of Calvin's socio-economic thought turn our attention once again to the consideration of what Calvin means by the social good. In relation to this, Biéler has argued that for Calvin, 'the church ought to be a leaven inspiring and generating social, political, and economic life'.<sup>38</sup> Körtner believes that Calvinism's social doctrine 'theologically views the world from the perspective of the church, which is at set above the individual'.<sup>39</sup> Busch also suggests that Calvin's understanding of society and economics can only be grasped 'in light of his concept of the church'.<sup>40</sup> Thus, Busch notes that, in Calvin's mind, since there is a clear structural analogy between the ecclesial organization and the social and economic organization, both church and socio-economic sphere are 'an institution for the support for a life in public weal and freedom'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, pp.295-97.

<sup>34</sup> Biéler, *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, pp.39-40.

<sup>35</sup> W. Fred Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary John Calvin & His Socio-Economic Impact*, (Michigan State University Press, 1987), pp.74-75.

<sup>36</sup> Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998), pp.94-96. Hereafter abbreviated into *Geneva*.

<sup>37</sup> McKim, "John Calvin: A Theologian for an Age of Limits", p.292.

<sup>38</sup> Biéler, *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, p.23.

<sup>39</sup> Körtner, "Calvinism and Capitalism", in *John Calvin's Impact on Church and Society*, p.170.

<sup>40</sup> Eberhard Busch, "A General Overview of the Reception of Calvin's Social and Economic Thought", in *John Calvin Rediscovered*, p.67.

<sup>41</sup> Busch, p.72.



Scholars' increasing interest in the close correlation between the ecclesial sphere and the socio-economic sphere is a significant reason for, and backdrop to, a re-illumination of Calvin's systematic theology on the relation of church and society in terms of the common good. This re-illumination is the *raison d'être* of this thesis. In a similar vein, one can assume that this shift in perspective on Calvin's socio-economic thought, from a sociological and capitalistic viewpoint to a theological and communal viewpoint, may have provided a significant background to the WARC's Accra Confession and the relevant decisions taken therein.

However, though scholars on both sides have revealed some remarkable insights on Calvin's idea on the common good, there seems to be a rather fragmentary and limited understanding of what the common good actually entails, perhaps because there is no explicit definition of the common good within Calvin's work. This is something that needs to be addressed. In fact, though there are numerous uses of the term 'the common good', one can rarely find a definition of its characteristics in Calvin's texts. On account of this, though Calvin's usage of the 'common good' has come into the spotlight in recent debate, there has been little analysis of the inter-relationship between his use of different phrases containing the term the 'common good', such as 'the common good of the church', 'the common good of humankind', and 'the common treasure of the church'.

Although one may concede that, in contrast to Aquinas's more explicit and concentrated references to the common good,<sup>42</sup> Calvin does not offer a central motif of the

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<sup>42</sup> Jean Porter stresses that Aquinas' motif of the common good plays an important role in his overall moral theory, although this motif is not so foundational as it is for contemporary Catholic social thought. See "The Common Good in Thomas Aquinas", in *In Search of the Common Good*, 2005, pp.91-120 (especially p.96). Regarding Aquinas' key account of the common good, see *Summa Theologica*, 5 Vols, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1948), I-II, Q.3, Art.1 and 2 (Happiness); I-II, Q.19, Art. 10 (Human Will); I-II, Q.60, Art 3 (Moral Virtue); I-II, Q.90, Art.2–Q.91, Art. 6, Q.92. Art.1, Q.94, Art.3, Q.96, Art.1-4, Q.97, Art.4, Q.100, Art.2, 8, 11, Q.105, Art.3 (Law); I-II, Q.111, Art.5 (Sanctifying Grace); I-II, Q.113, Art.1 (Justifying Grace); II-II, Q.26, Art.2 and 3 (Charity); II-II, Q.31, Art.3 (Doing Good); II-II, Q.33, Art.1 and 6 (Correction); II-II, Q.42, Art.2 (Sedition); II-II, Q.47, Art.10 (Solitude); II-II, Q.47, Art.11 (Prudence); II-II, Q.58, Art.5-12 (Justice); II-II, Q.59, Art.1 (Injustice); II-II, Q.61, Art.1 and 2 (Distributive Justice and Commutative Justice); II-II, Q.63, Art.2 (The Dispensation of Spiritual Goods); II-II, Q.64, Art.3-7 (Murder); II-II, Q.101, Art.3 (Piety); II-II, Q.102, Art.3 (Observance); III, Q.46, Art.2 (the Passion of Christ); III, Q.65. Art.3 (Eucharist); see *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 5 Vols. trans. Anton C. Pegis and Vernon Bonke (Notre Dame, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), III, Ch. XVII, 5 (God as the common good); III, Ch. XXXIX, 1 (Happiness as the common good); III, Ch. LVIX, 5 (The common good as being more

common good by which to provide a way to reflect on social thought, he does, nevertheless, employ terms such as the common good of the church (*commune ecclesiae bonum*) or the common good of the humankind (*publicum generis humani bonum*) in his final theological enterprise, the *Institutes* of 1559. In addition, Calvin writes about the ecclesial or social common good in a number of his commentaries, sermons, catechisms, and letters. This indicates the fact that the works of Calvin contained a doctrine of the common good, although it was not developed systematically and comprehensively. Therefore, one may suggest that Calvin was both the originator and the groundbreaker of Reformed teaching about the common good, not only within his own time but also within later traditions; thus does a grain of seed sprout and grow into a big plant. In addition, it may be argued that Calvin was the first theologian who made both a clear-cut distinction and correlation between the common good of the church and the common good of humankind. This is supported by his twofold distinction between special grace, given by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and common grace, given by the general work of the Holy Spirit.

This then leads to the question of how the doctrine of the common good flows out of Calvin's overall teaching. How, for instance, do Calvin's thoughts on this interact with his insistence on God's image in humanity, his doctrine of the Christian life and Church, his understanding of the Law, and his insistence on social ethics? This thesis hopes to clarify Calvin's original and central thoughts on the common good by analyzing both his clear articulations of this theme as well as discussions where he addressed it in a more implicit manner. On this basis, the thesis will highlight the previous lack of theological foundations and attention to ecclesial application on the part of Calvin scholars. This will be addressed first in Part A, where Chapters Two to Four examine God's image, sanctification, and Law. Then, in Part B, Chapter Five considers the church, as the background to its social application in Chapter Six. In doing so, this thesis intends to focus on discovering the distinguishing structure found in Calvin's thoughts on the common good: that is, first, how Calvin's classical and humanistic understanding and his biblical and evangelical vision constitute a multi-layered notion of the common good with both spiritual and moral dimensions; secondly, what the characteristic is of the mutual relation

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godlike than the good of individual); III, Ch. CXXIII, 6 (Law instituted for the common good); III, Ch. CXLVII, 5 (the punishment for the common good).

between the ecclesial and social common good in accomplishing the value of the common good both at divine and moral levels. In sum, this thesis intends to show how these varying binary relationships of the common good are embodied in church and society through the voluntary mutual sharing of the gifts of grace by the Trinitarian participation of believers united in Christ by the Spirit.

This thesis will adopt the methodology of synchronic analysis in order to understand Calvin's original thoughts on the common good within his theological compositions. According to Turchetti, Calvin's sixteenth-century theological and political ideas can be examined according either to synchronic analysis or diachronic analysis; by the former method, one can 'let Calvin express himself in his own words and not through the prism of our preferences or commentaries', and by the latter method, one can 'follow the evolution or change in meaning that contemporary authors...have attributed to Calvin's doctrine under differing circumstance'. Thus, through diachronic analysis, contemporary authors can interpret and appreciate Calvin from their own current viewpoint and mindset. However, through synchronic analysis, one can give weight to Calvin's original thoughts. Thus, in order to explore Calvin's views on the common good and its theological enterprise, synchronic analysis may be more appropriate.<sup>43</sup> Along with these methods, this thesis will utilize historical methods to get a broader perspective on some particular issues – especially on the development of Calvin's theoretical concept of the common good and his practical activity to realise it in Geneva.

The source material for this study of Calvin's thought on the common good, is principally the *Institutes* 1536, 1541, 1559, and his lectures on Genesis, Exodus, Psalms, Isaiah, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians. Calvin's views on the common good are scattered throughout his works, not only within his theological and pastoral lectures, but also in treatises and letters. Throughout Calvin's works, terms relating to 'the common good' occur in Latin 55 times in total: *commune bonum* (11 occurrences); *commune ecclesiae bonum* (10); *communi bono* (3); *publicum generis humani bonum* (2); *publicum bonum* (3); *bonum nostrum* (26). In addition, terms relating to 'the common god'

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<sup>43</sup> See Mario Turchetti, "The Contribution of Calvin and Calvinism to the Birth of Modern Democracy", in *John Calvin's Impact on Church and Society, 1509-2009*, ed. Martin Ernst Hirzel and Martin Sallmann, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), p.194.

occur in French 87 times in total: *bien commun*, occurs 47 times: (on 41 occasions to define ‘the common good’ and on 6 occasions to describe ‘the shared inheritance’); *bien publique* (19); *profit commun* (10); *l’utilité commune* (8); *l’utilité publique* (2); *benefice commun* (1). Another relevant Latin phrase, *aedificationem ecclesia*, occurs 25 times, and is used to describe a communal value at both ecclesial and social level with the ethical, architectural, and political nuances such as *bonum*, *aedificationem*, and *publicum*.<sup>44</sup> This frequent use of the term ‘common good’ shows how Calvin has this notion in mind and attempts to plant it into the seedbed of his whole theological garden. This thesis therefore attempts to take a systematic approach to its study, using three main foci: first, the reconstitution of Calvin’s theology vis-à-vis the common good according to the dynamic stages of the salvation story; second, the analysis of the three-cornered relationship of God, humanity, and neighbours; third, the mutual relation between the common good of the church and humankind both at the divine and moral level or both at the biblical and humanistic level.

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<sup>44</sup> I have examined the entire online edition of Calvin’s *Corpus Reformatorum* in order to note the location and number of his own Latin and French terms relating to his notion of the common good. In addition, I have also compared his use of these terms with their definitions in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, as follows. First of all, it seems that the term *bonum* mainly indicates the ethical dimension of the common good. This term refers to ‘any good things or circumstance, a boon, advantage, blessing, benefit, good fortune, prosperity, virtue, what is morally good, right or equitable, good behaviour or right principles, possessions, property, estate, virtuous, politically sound or royal’. Secondly, the term *aedifico* means ‘to erect a building or engage in building operations’; *aedificatio* refers to ‘an act or process of building or a building or edifice’, and *aedes* refers to ‘a dwelling place, house, and a temple’. Therefore, when Calvin uses the term *aedificationem* in discussion of the common interest of the church and its members, one may assume that he intends to draw a picture of the spiritual value of the common good with his analogical exposition of the architectural image, following Paul’s biblical language of believers as the temple of God. Thirdly, Calvin also seems to use the term *publicum* in order to indicate the political and socio-economic dimension of the common good. This term refers to ‘public property, public ownership or possession, public land, public funds, the public interest, the public welfare or benefit, as a matter of public concern’, and *publicus* means ‘of or belonging to the people corporately, authorized by the state, of or affecting everyone in the state, available to, shared or enjoyed by, all members of the community, common to all, universal’. Finally, one needs to check the communal and social nuances contained in the term ‘*commune*’. ‘Commune’ refers to ‘property or rights held in common, joint possessions, a public or common fund, public places, the interests of the public, for the good of all concerned, commonwealth’. ‘*Communicatio*’ means ‘the action of sharing or imparting, community of ground’. ‘*Communico*’ means ‘to share, to associate, unite, link, to impart or communicate, to bring into common use’, See *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.61, 238, 369, 1512-3.

As others have explored the social, political, and economic dimension, though not in great depth, we are going to show how Calvin's idea of the common good is embedded and grounded in his theology.<sup>45</sup> The structure we have chosen is as follows.

Following this introduction, Part A focuses on producing a systematic theological analysis of Calvin's idea of the common good. Chapter Two considers the correlation between Calvin's tripartite understanding of God's image in humanity with its spiritual, social, and ethical implications in terms of the common good. Chapter Three focuses on how Calvin's understanding of sanctification plays a vital role in believer's life for the common good, especially how his notion of self-denial functions for both the common good of the church and the good and edification of the neighbours. Chapter Four is divided into two parts, the role of the Law and of the Decalogue. The first part will focus on how Calvin's understanding of the three stages of the Law (before the Fall, after the Fall and in Christ) can be re-illuminated by his notion of the common good and how the three uses of the Law, as gifts from God, can be incorporated into the united function designed for the value of the common good at both the ecclesial and social level. Alongside this, there will be a case study of Christian freedom in relation to the third use of the Law in terms of the common good. The second part of this fourth chapter will focus on how Calvin's thoughts on the common good can be embodied in his doctrine of the Decalogue. It provides a detailed case study of how Calvin's multiple understanding of the three uses of the Law in the three stages can be used in each item of the Ten Commandments for both the spiritual common good and moral common good.

In Part B, the thesis focuses on the practical applications of the above-mentioned multi-faceted theological foundation. Chapter Five discusses Calvin's understanding of the organic structure of the church in Christ-centred anthropology as a foreground for the common good, within and without the church. Consideration will also be given to his communal understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Calvin's ideas on the communal function of prayer and sacrament will then be elucidated before attention is

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<sup>45</sup> McGrath stresses that, for Calvin, 'theology' did not exist only for 'the piety of a privatized faith' but, instead, 'offered a framework of engaging with public life', see "Calvin and the Christian Calling", *FT* 94 (1999), pp.31-35. In line with this, Timothy D. Terrell also makes the point that it is 'the ways in which it informed the Christian's participation in public affairs' by which Calvin's theological work can be evaluated as 'eminently practical', see "Calvin's

turned to his views on the public offices and properties of the church from the perspective of the common good. Chapter Six discusses how Calvin's doctrine of the common grace can be re-illuminated by his understanding of the common good of humankind, and how this common grace is related to the spiritual common good of the church. Thereafter, by keeping in mind the previous debate above on Calvin's socio-economic concerns, his ideas on the value of the socio-economic common good will be elucidated within his thoughts concerning labour, wages, commerce, interest. Finally, there will be an attempt to clarify Calvin's views on social welfare and its historical examples of charity such as the General Hospitals and the French Fund from the perspective of his distinctive, balanced understanding of the spiritual and social common good.<sup>46</sup>

In sum, the aim of this thesis will be to provide a systematic theological grounding and application of Calvin's idea of the common good. This will be a valuable contribution to existing discussion regarding the common good amongst Calvin scholars, by illuminating the theological foundations of their current socio-economic focus.

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Contributions to Economic Theory And Policy", in *Calvin and Culture*, ed. David W. Hall and Marvin Padgett (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2010), pp.69-70.

<sup>46</sup> Calvin's notion of the common good in the political arena is a very significant part of his work with regard to its practical application to humankind. However, chapter 6, which focuses on social ethics, will deal with his socio-economic concerns without examining the political angle, since this thesis begins with scholars' socio-economic discussion of Calvin's common good. Moreover, the main goal of this thesis is to uncover its theological groundings and ecclesial applications as the backdrop for social applications. Therefore, although there is no discrete section on the political arena in the main body of the thesis, the primary argument presented will be manifest within this framework. With this in mind, instead of a too-brief examination of this broad topic within chapter 6, I will fully discuss Calvin's idea of the political common good in the Appendix, giving due attention to the large volume of work on the common good arising from his political concerns.

## **PART A: THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING**

As has already been shown in the introduction, Part A will elucidate the three different approaches of Calvin's notion of the common good: theological-anthropological, Trinitarian-participatory, and integrated-legalistic, each of which forms one facet of his whole conceptualization. In Chapter Two, the theological-anthropological approach will be used to illuminate the divine and social levels of the first and most fundamental facet of Calvin's notion of the common good through its multiple analyses of the relational, substantial, and communal dimensions of God's image. Based on the Christ-centred anthropology discussed in Chapter Two, the Trinitarian-participatory approach will be used in Chapter Three. Here, this approach will illuminate the divine and social levels of the second facet of Calvin's notion of the common good, through its analysis of the various features of believers' self-denial. In Chapter Four, the integrated-legalistic approach will be used to illuminate the divine and social levels of the third facet of Calvin's notion of the common good through its unifying analysis of the three stages and uses of the Law (with a case study of Christian freedom) and the Decalogue. This work will show how Calvin's idea of the common good is embedded and grounded in his theological enterprise, which provides a valid theological backdrop to the modern trend within Calvin studies of socio-economic discussion related to the common good.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE IMAGE OF GOD AND THE COMMON GOOD**

This chapter will consider what Calvin understood of the image of God in humanity and its relation to the believer's life for the common good of the church and humankind. There will also be a discussion of Calvin's understanding of the tripartite nature of God's image in humanity and its ethical implications, both at the ecclesial and social level of the common good.

This chapter will argue that Calvin, within the context of his doctrine of Christian life, established a strong correlation between the image of God in humanity and the common good. It will also discuss how Calvin's three-fold understanding of the image of God in humanity can play a role in relation to the common good, according to the three dynamic stages of humankind's salvation: before the Fall, after the Fall and in Christ's Redemption. Through this process, one will see how Calvin attempts to restore the value of the common good as the original order in creation through his multiple understanding of the image of God in humanity within salvation history moving towards consummation.

#### **2.1. The development of Calvin's language about 'God's image', in relation to the 'common good': a comparison of early editions of the *Institutes***

In terms of the common good, how important is the development of Calvin's language about the image of God in humanity? Moreover, what effect does this development have on his understanding of this key idea? This thesis will suggest that, as outlined in the introduction, Calvin attempts to show that his notion of the common good is not simply a moral, social, and humanistic concept but a divine, spiritual, and evangelical concept. In order to do this, it will be necessary first to focus on significant developments in Calvin's ideas regarding the relation between the image of God and the common good by comparing the 1536 and 1539 (1541 French version) editions of Calvin's *Institutes*.

In the first edition of the *Institutes* (1536), Calvin presents his brief statement on the image of God (*ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei*) within his discussion of the 'knowledge of man'. Here, the image of God given to Adam is represented as the gifts of God's grace



(*gratiae donis Deo*), which seem to be emphasized as not the endowment itself but rather Adam's relationship to God.<sup>1</sup> Adam's nature reflects God's nature.<sup>2</sup> God gives His goodness to humanity as the gift of grace, and it becomes the image of God in humanity. Here, Calvin's metaphor of humanity as a mirror reflecting God's goodness is important for illustrating the implicit correlation between God's image in humanity and the common good. However, after the Fall, 'all the benefits from divine grace' (*omnia divinae gratiae bona*)<sup>3</sup> are lost. As will be illustrated in this chapter, Calvin discusses these three stages of the giving, receiving, and losing of the image of God using the language of grace and gift, thus narrating, with simplicity and brevity, the loss of the image of God in humanity. Despite this loss, Calvin still teaches that one should embrace all humanity, including pagans, with 'mercy and gentleness', regardless of their faith, attitude, and religious identity.<sup>4</sup> Although not directly referring to the image of God, it could be suggested, as Douglass does, that Calvin is implying that the surviving image of God includes an ethical purpose.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Calvin appears to connect implicitly the surviving image of God with human solidarity in his discussion of the Decalogue and the Faith,<sup>6</sup> and as Douglass rightly notes, Calvin's writing develops from his implicit emphasis on this in 1536 to his explicit emphasis on this same subject in 1541 and 1559.<sup>7</sup>

In the second Latin edition of the *Institutes* (1539), and the French translation published in 1541, Calvin repeats this earlier understanding of the image of God in humanity, describing it as 'graces and outstanding favours'.<sup>8</sup> However, in addition, he introduces the practical aspects of the image of God, focusing on the believer's participation in all good things and all the benefits given by God's grace, both of which

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Institution of the Christian Religion* (1536), trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), pp.20-21; OS 1:38. Hereafter abbreviated into *Inst.* 1536.

<sup>2</sup> Calvin, in his *Institutes* of 1559, manifests that God's goodness is revealed in humanity, and human goodness reveals this in his doctrine of the knowledge of God and humanity. According to Gerrish, Calvin's metaphor of the mirror of God's goodness is vital in his thoughts on God's image in humanity. See "The Mirror of God's Goodness", in *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, pp.107-122.

<sup>3</sup> *Inst.* 1536, p.21.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.28-29, pp.84-85.

<sup>5</sup> See Jane D. Douglass, "The Image of God in Humanity: A Comparison of Calvin's Teaching in 1536 and 1559", in *In Honour of John Calvin, 1509-64: Papers from the 1986 International Calvin Symposium*, ed. E.J. Furcha (Montreal: McGill University, 1987), p.184.

<sup>6</sup> *Inst.* 1536, pp.20-56, 84-85; OS 1:27-55, 91, 106-107.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.199.

are conditioned to contribute to the common good of the church.<sup>9</sup> Thus, within his second edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin reiterates the proposal that God's image as the divine gift of grace may become the ontological foundation for the believer's charity, love, and desire to share the gift of grace for the common good.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, it may be suggested that the starting point for Calvin's belief that the image of God in all humanity is the basis of love and charity toward all humanity is implicitly indicated in the first edition of the *Institutes* (1536) by his use of the phrases 'our fear and love toward God' and 'fair-minded interpreters toward all'.<sup>11</sup> However, both in his French translation (1541) and its original Latin edition, *Institutes* (1539), Calvin's new thoughts on 'God's image in all'<sup>12</sup> appear already to foreshadow his later theological understanding of the imperative for universal love and charity, described in the final edition of the *Institutes* (1559) as being grounded in the need 'to look upon the image of God in all men'.<sup>13</sup> This final edition will be considered in more detail later in this and subsequent chapters.

Thus, it would appear that Calvin's theological growth on the anthropological background of the common good takes place during his three years' pastoral ministry in Strasburg between 1538 and 1541. Here he began to correlate the ideas of 'God's image in all' and 'the common good of the church', before starting his ministry in Geneva in 1541. Therefore, one can propose that Calvin's theory about God's image in all within the context of the common good had been established within his mind before his re-entry into Geneva. This is illustrated by the development of ideas between the two editions of the *Institutes*. In sum, it is notable that Calvin uses the notion of the common good as a teleological value in a process of bringing the image of God in humanity to the forefront as the ontological foundation for the believer's ethical and charitable life. Thus, one may suggest that Calvin's notion of the common good contains both divine and moral

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<sup>8</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1541 French edition*, Trans. Elsie Anne McKee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), p.50. Hereafter abbreviated to *Inst.* 1541.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.50, 688.

<sup>10</sup> *Inst.* 1536, 1.18-22, p.36; CO 1:39-41; c.f. *Inst.* 1559, 2.8.48.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.21, p.36, OS I:40, 51.

<sup>12</sup> *Inst.* 1541, p.689.

implications on account of his explicit focus on the image of God in humanity as the universal ethical standard.

## **2.2. The co-relational complexity between ‘God’s image in man’ and ‘the common good’, in Calvin’s mature thought.**

Investigating not only the correlation between the image of God and the common good but also the correlation between the complexities of the two can be a useful way to uncover why Calvin develops the notion of the common good at the divine and moral level, and at the ecclesial and social level. Later, in this chapter, there will be an investigation of this correlation and its implications, but first, in this section, one ought briefly to examine how Calvin incorporates this into the foundation of his theological groundwork for the common good.

First of all, it will be useful to examine the correlation between God’s image and the common good in the context of self-denial. Calvin indicates that the believers’ life of self-denial was to be demonstrated through their distribution of gifts of grace for the common good of the church and for the benefit of their neighbours; neighbours here being both believers *and* unbelievers.<sup>14</sup> Regarding this, Partee emphasizes that the divine mandate to look at God’s image in all humanity must be recognised as the result of the first part of self-denial, which includes the acknowledgement of God’s benefits entrusted to humanity for their communal purpose.<sup>15</sup> It is important to remember that the triple correlation of God’s image, self-denial and the common good has already appeared in the second edition of the *Institutes* in 1541.<sup>16</sup> As Calvin states:

We must remember that all the graces which God has given us are not our own possessions but free gifts of His generosity....there will be great reason for us rather to abase ourselves...“all we have received from God’s grace....for the common good of the church” [1 Cor. 12:7]... scripture goes before us and exhorts

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3.7.6. p.696. Hereafter abbreviated to (book. chapter. section) without title.

<sup>14</sup> Calvin’s definition of the sphere of ‘neighbour’ will be briefly discussed in the last section of this chapter and in more detail in chapter 3, in relation to ‘the good of neighbours’.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), p.218; see also 3.7.6.

<sup>16</sup> See 2.1, above. Discussion of Calvin’s ideas about self-denial will be expanded in chapter 3.

us not to consider what people deserve in themselves but rather to consider God's image in all; we owe all honour and love to that image.<sup>17</sup>

Here, Calvin first understands the common good of the church (that is, showing beneficence to one's neighbours) as a divine condition of God's gift giving; second, he theorizes on the duty of love towards all people who have God's image in themselves. He views both of these conditions as being the two treatments necessary to overcome the difficulties of self-denial. In other words, for Calvin, these are the essential theological elements for building his doctrine of the Christian life. Hence, Calvin links and develops the ideas of 'self-denial', 'the common good', and 'God's image in all', granting them a close, internal connection.<sup>18</sup>

With this in mind, attention must be paid to the mutuality between Calvin's understanding of the image of God and his theology of the common good. As this chapter hopes to show, this double aspect, both at an ecclesial and social level, in Calvin's theology of the common good is based on the dual complexity, at the relational and substantial level, of Calvin's perspective on the image of God. One can argue that such a 'double aspect' in Calvin's theological thought can not only resolve his apparently incongruous statements regarding both the relative character and the substantive character of God's image, but also explains why the concept of 'the common good' emerges as the common ground of both ecclesial and social ethics. In addition, one can see how Calvin's understanding of the image of God embraces both the relational perspective of God the Redeemer and the substantive perspective of God the Creator.<sup>19</sup> This is a theological presupposition within Calvin's theology of the common good, which is applicable both to the love toward church members as the body of Christ, and to the love toward all humankind. A careful study of Calvin's theory of God's image in all is therefore crucial to developing an understanding of his thoughts on the common good as this forms an intrinsic part of his thought on human self-denial.

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<sup>17</sup> *Inst.* 1541, pp.688-89.

<sup>18</sup> *John Calvin's Sermons on Galatians*, trans. Kathy Childress (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 41st, 6:9-11, pp.616-627, Calvin emphasises this connection when he teaches that 'As God distributes different abilities and gifts to each of us, we are obliged to use them for those who need us and whom we can help...each of us is expected to strive and even constrain ourselves to help those who ask for our support...since God has given us the responsibility of doing good to all men because they are made of the same flesh'. Refer also to Calvin, *Sermons on the book of Micah*, trans. Benjamin Farley (NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 25th, 7:1-3, p.374.

<sup>19</sup> 1.15.3; Comm. *Genesis*. 1:26.

What meaning and function, then, does Calvin's understanding of the image of God have in the context of the theology of the common good? It can be argued that, in order to seize the mutuality between the two, the most significant factor is Calvin's ethical perspective on God's image in humanity. However, in order to understand this fully, it is necessary to ascertain both the meaning of God's image in terms of salvation history and its specific significance for humanity. For, in Calvin's writings, the ethical dimension of the image of God is not separated from its theological presuppositions; rather, both are closely connected. This chapter will attempt to demonstrate how both sides cooperate and help to compose a theological anthropology aimed at the common good.

Calvin's understanding of the three stages of the image of God in humanity can help to clarify the changing nature of the correlation between God's image and the common good.

### **2.3.1. Before the Fall**

How did the image of God manifest itself in humanity before the Fall? Furthermore, how did this image of God in humanity contribute to inter-relational harmony? According to Calvin's exegesis of the creation account in Genesis 1, God carefully orders His divine image in humanity to the benefit of all human life. Calvin's language of 'a wondrous goodness' or 'all good things' shows the original well-designed shape of God's image in humanity before the Fall,<sup>20</sup> where 'God breathed into him some part of his own glory'.<sup>21</sup> In relation to this, it is notable that Calvin begins his *Institutes* (1559) by focusing on God as the 'full abundance of every good' (*bonorum omnium perfectam affluentiam*),<sup>22</sup> and repeatedly illustrates God's image with the language of goodness, such as 'fountainhead and source of every good' (*bonorum omnium fontem...originem*).<sup>23</sup> In other words, one may suggest that 'goodness' is one of the main divine characteristics composing the entire image of God. Moreover, for Calvin, God as the fountain of good is the giver of his

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<sup>20</sup> With regard to this, Gerrish presents 'God's goodness' both as the antithesis of human self-love and as a relational standard to contrast humanity before and after the Fall. See "The Mirror of God's Goodness", p.108.

<sup>21</sup> John Calvin, *Sermons on Genesis, Chapters 1-11*, trans. Rob Roy McGregor (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), Ch 5:1-25, p.488.

<sup>22</sup> 1.1.1; CO 2:31-32.

<sup>23</sup> 1.2.2; CO 2:35.

goodness to humanity, and humans, as receivers of the divine goodness, reflect<sup>24</sup> and realize the image of God within them by sharing the divine goodness with their neighbours. Calvin states that Adam ‘had been created in the image of God [Gen. 1:27], thus suggesting that man was blessed, not because of his own good actions, but by participation in God’.<sup>25</sup>

With this in mind, it is helpful to consider Schreiner’s twofold categorization of the image of God as relational and substantial, drawing inferences from Calvin’s texts. The relational character refers to humanity’s ‘right spiritual attitude’, ‘gratitude’ to God, and ‘reflection’ of the divine nature in humanity (*coram Deo*), which is highlighted by Barth, Torrance and Niesel; the substantial character refers to the order of creation and the divine image ‘engraved’ in the human soul, which is highlighted by Brunner, Gloede and Stauffer.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Comm. *Colossians*. 3:10, p.212, ‘what is the image of God...the rectitude and integrity of the whole soul, so that man reflects, like a mirror, the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness of God’. Kathryn Tanner partly draws her idea of the role of ‘reflection’ in gift-giving in her Trinitarian thought from Calvin’s *Institutes*, 2.8.51, p.415: believers, as free active agents, reflect the goodness of God’s own triune being in their lives and actions, and in this manner, express the image of God, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), pp.70-71. This ‘reflective giving’ is, being non-competitive, ‘not conditional upon a return being made by them [humans]’, that is, neither simple return under threat or an obligatory payment of debt. (*Economy of Grace*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), p.63) This is contrasted with the case of famous Maussian trilogy: ‘to give, to receive, to reciprocate’. According to Godbout, ‘to reciprocate’ is the repetitive result from ‘to return’ between the opposite independent subject in the circle of exchange. Usually, this return is supposed to be obligatory, conditional, and physical in the modern gift-giving system as well as in the exchange in Archaic Societies, Jacques Godbout, *The World of the Gift*, trans. Donald Winkler (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), p.197.

<sup>25</sup> 2.2.1, p.256; Jason Van Vliet points out that our attention should be directed to ‘the father-children relationship’, which is found in Calvin’s explicit and extensive descriptions such as Romans, Genesis, and Job. This father-children resemblance in Calvin’s theological anthropology functions as a distinctive metaphor to represent the versatile similarities between God and humanity, such as morality, intellectuality, longevity, and dominion over other creatures. Van Vliet’s analysis of this father-children parallel can be a useful tool for exploring the whole picture of the relational, substantial, and communal characters of God’s image in humanity, which is discussed in this chapter. See “‘As a Son to his Father’: An Overlooked Aspect of the *Imago Dei* in Calvin”, in *Calvinus sacrarum literarum interpres*, ed. Herman Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), pp.108-118.

<sup>26</sup> Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1991), p.55. Her analysis is based on the Calvin texts, Comm. *Genesis*. 1:26; CO 23:26-27; see also 1.2.1; 1.5.1-6; 1.15.3-8; 2.2.12. Schreiner’s comments ought not to mislead the reader into believing that both Barth and Brunner raise only one aspect of God’s image in humanity within their discussion. Rather, whilst both scholars (and their followers) emphasize their respective viewpoints, they do appear to take into consideration the other’s perspective. For example, Torrance makes use of Calvin’s mirror metaphor to demonstrate both the relational and substantial images of God,

However, in addition to Schreiner's categories, it will be helpful to add one further category: the communal character of the image of God in both male and female. It can be argued that this third category clarifies the deeper understanding of the role of God's image in humanity by emphasizing God's original design for humankind's holy and cooperative community in creation. This will be dealt with in more detail later.<sup>27</sup>

It will be helpful now to examine all three categories of God's image in humanity before the Fall – relational, substantial, and communal – in terms of the divine order in creation. This will support the argument that, in Calvin's mind, these three categories are to be re-illuminated from an ethical standpoint. Furthermore, it will explain how this aids understanding of the correlation, proposed by Calvin, between God's image in humanity before the Fall and humankind's harmonious wellbeing in the time of creation. In order to show this, Calvin's exegesis of Genesis 1 will be used as a case study.

First of all, one ought to consider the relational character of God's image in humanity before the Fall.<sup>28</sup> For Calvin, this relational character refers to the complete excellence, or integrity (*integritas* in Latin; *intégrité* in French), of humanity, represented by a right-ordered soul standing fast in an uprightness given by God<sup>29</sup> and a human body within which the traces of God's glory shine; it is therefore essential for maintaining the original perfect relationship between God and humanity.<sup>30</sup>

In Calvin's mind, God's image in humanity, 'the perfect excellence of human nature which is shown in Adam before his defection',<sup>31</sup> mainly entails the relational character of God's image rather than *only* the substantial character. It is clear that Calvin seeks comprehensiveness in his definition. In other words, for Calvin, God's image in humanity does not mean the ability simply for judgment but rather for '*right* judgment'; it does not merely refer to affection and reason, but rather '*affections in harmony with reason*'; it does

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obtained through the Word and the universe: See Thomas F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), pp.35-37.

<sup>27</sup> See pp.29-32.

<sup>28</sup> As Julie Canlis notes, for Calvin, the premise that humanity had been created in the image of God suggests that 'man was blessed, not because of his own good actions, but by participation in God' (2.1.2), so that Adam's life in the garden seeks all good things 'in' God, not merely 'from' God; see Julie Canlis, "What does it mean to be human?", *TS* 16.2, Autumn (2009), p.94.

<sup>29</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch1.2, pp.20-21.

<sup>30</sup> 1.15.3. p.188; Comm. *Genesis*. 1:27, p.95.

<sup>31</sup> 1.15.4, p.190.

not refer to the simple working of all human senses, but rather to the ‘*sound and well-regulated*’ nature of all human sense.<sup>32</sup> Thus, according to Calvin, the substantial character of God’s image in humanity before the Fall is thoroughly located in the context of the relational character. That is, God’s image, which is in humans when they are in a right relation with God, is visibly manifested by relational criteria, such as humility, gratitude, and obedience. Here, the integrity placed in humanity allows them to preserve God’s glory and power within them,<sup>33</sup> providing them with the blessings of God in this life,<sup>34</sup> and ultimately, directing them to ascend from this life to eternal life.<sup>35</sup> For Calvin, as clearly shown in a sermon on Genesis 1:26-28, this relational character of God’s image in humanity is directly related to His original plan of creation, where the soul’s will is ‘directed to everything good and righteous’ and the body becomes an instrument to joyfully serve the soul.<sup>36</sup>

However, the Fall caused humanity to lose this integrity (*coram Deo*) and subsequently to lose the divine power that had until this point been present. As a result, men and women suffer a disorder of the soul, causing them to descend from a right relation with God to one that is wrong or hostile. Moreover, they are led down a path towards ignorance, iniquity, impotence, death, and judgment.<sup>37</sup> For Calvin, the image and likeness of God is therefore cancelled and effaced in Adam and his descendants after the fall.<sup>38</sup>

This loss has an impact on the communal aspect of God’s image in human fellowship. Calvin’s understanding of the relational character of the image of God in humanity can be linked with his notion of God’s image as an order and power for humankind’s communal harmony. Before the Fall, when Adam and Eve possessed the relational character of God’s image, they are ‘truly excelled in everything good’.<sup>39</sup> Thus, one may infer that the loss of the relational character of God’s image after the Fall led to the loss of the original

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<sup>32</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 1:27, p.95.

<sup>33</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch1.2, pp.20-21.

<sup>34</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 38:7.

<sup>35</sup> Comm. *Acts*. 20:24; Comm. *Romans*. 3:29.

<sup>36</sup> See Sermon 6: ‘Man’s Purpose is to Possess and have Dominion over Creation’ in *Sermons on Genesis*, p.97.

<sup>37</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch1.2, p.21.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 1:27, p.95.



fellowship with both God and neighbour, and made humanity, bereft of such communal participation, powerless in everything good.

This perfect and original relationship is important in order to understand the nature of the restored image of God in Christ. In his commentary on Genesis 1:26, Calvin pays special attention to the relational aspect with regard to the original form of God's image in all, relating it to the later-restored image of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ, and qualifying it as 'righteousness and true holiness'.<sup>40</sup> Speaking of God's image in humanity before the Fall, Calvin states, 'When we would comprehend all these things...that man, in respect of spirit, was made partaker of the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God'.<sup>41</sup> Calvin believed that the purpose of the Gospel was primarily the restoration of the relational character of God's image, such as the 'right', 'sound' and 'well-regulated' human 'mind and heart', to the original status of humanity:

Since the image of God has been destroyed in us by the fall, we may judge from its restoration what it originally had been. Paul says that we are transformed into the image of God by the gospel. And...spiritual regeneration is nothing else than the restoration of the same image...That he made this image to consist in "righteousness and true holiness", is by the figure *synecdoche*; for though this is the chief part, it is not the whole of God's image.<sup>42</sup>

The relational aspect of God's image bestowed to humanity in creation is intrinsic to God's image restored in the believer by the gospel of Jesus Christ, which will be discussed in more detail later. Accordingly, from this close correlation between the original and the restored image of God, one may evaluate the meaning and function of the common good of the original creation by looking into the common good of the church and humankind; since, for Calvin, the common good of the church and humankind in Christ by the Spirit is no less than the restoration of the same common good of the original creation before the Fall.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 1:26, p.94.

<sup>41</sup> *Psycopannychia*, CO 5:180C; *Tracts and Treaties* III: 423.

<sup>42</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 1:26, p.94; regarding Calvin's biblical sketch on the restored and living image of God in Christ in terms of the gospel, see Randall C. Zachman, *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp.257-342.

<sup>43</sup> As Heinrich Quistorp notes, Calvin believes that 'the future glory of creation consists essentially in the restoration of its original innocence and immortality'. In terms of the common good as the original order, this statement needs to be understood not as a simple return to the original order in creation before the Fall but as the consummative restoration of the original order through the

Moving on, it will be helpful now to consider the substantial character of God's image in humanity before the Fall. For Calvin, this seems to be an important motif in the present life for the common good in human society. When describing God's image and likeness as the 'endowments which God has conferred on human nature' and as God's 'gratuitous gifts', Calvin does not appear to make any clear distinction between the relational character and the substantial character of God's image in humanity.<sup>44</sup>

However, in Calvin's mind, it seems that both God's 'endowments' and God's 'gratuitous gifts' are connected not only to the relational character of God's image but also to the substantial character of God's image. For Calvin, 'the several parts of the soul' in the human mind and heart are recognized as 'the chief seat of the divine image'; moreover, the human 'body' is in 'a suitable correspondence with this internal order'. These two observations clearly suggest that Calvin understands the substantial character of God's image as an instrument for the operation of the relational character of God's image.<sup>45</sup> Thus, it seems that he takes a holistic approach to the existence of both a substantial character and a relational character of God's image, without, however, making any explicit attempts to classify the two as distinct features of his doctrine.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, when Calvin gives attention to the substantial aspect of God's image in humanity in the time of creation, he describes it using terms such as 'God's wisdom' or 'God's glory' in order to stress humanity as the most excellent example and 'a clear mirror of God's work',<sup>47</sup> adorned by God with exceptional gifts,<sup>48</sup> such as divine symmetry and beauty.<sup>49</sup>

What, then, happens to the substantial and relational aspects of God's image in humanity after the Fall? According to Calvin, the characteristics of God's image represented as divine wisdom or glory in humanity constitute 'the whole excellence by

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perfect image of Christ, see *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, trans. Harold Knight (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009), pp.181-86; originally published by Lutterworth Press in 1955.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.93.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp.94-95.

<sup>46</sup> See examples in 1.5.3, p.54.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.55.

<sup>48</sup> 1.14. 20-22.

<sup>49</sup> 1.5.2, pp.53-54.

which man's nature towers over all the kinds of living creatures'.<sup>50</sup> Despite the devastating effects of the Fall, they are not wholly erased or 'totally annihilated', but are severely damaged and 'almost blotted out,' so that, as Calvin states, 'nothing remains after the ruin except what is confused, mutilated, and disease-ridden'.<sup>51</sup>

This then raises the question, which specific characteristic of God's image in humanity is Calvin referring to here? That is, are the foundations for 'the whole excellence' of human nature based upon the relational character, the substantial character, or the communal character? Calvin does not explicitly distinguish between them; thus, it is unlikely that he is referring only to the relational character. However, his nuance in the text might suggest that he is referring to the substantial character, when he declares that 'there are to be in him such powers and gifts that they serve as signs and imprints to show that the human race is like God's lineage'.<sup>52</sup>

This apparent ambiguity has led to different interpretations of Calvin's exact point. Accordingly, Brunner and his followers focus on the whole excellence in human nature, as 'one joined in the light of understanding',<sup>53</sup> from the substantial perspective on God's image in the sense of formal or structural humanity.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, Barth and his followers focus more on the whole excellence in human nature from the relational perspective on God's image. They seem to stress another of Calvin's statements, that God's image is manifest in the elect insofar as they have been reborn in the Spirit, by refuting Brunner's stress on the remnant 'formal Imago Dei' and 'the status and significance of a point of contact' between God and humanity even after the Fall.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> 1.15. 3-4, p.188.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.189.

<sup>52</sup> *Sermons on Genesis* 1:26-28, p.93.

<sup>53</sup> 1.15.4, p.190; Brunner considers that Calvin touches upon the distinction between the formal and the material factors of God's image in humanity: the formal and structural sense of the Old Testament denotes 'all the superiority of man within creation' in order to be 'a subject' and 'to be responsible', and the material sense of the New Testament denotes '*justitia originalis*', understood as 'the possibility or the willing to do that which is good in the sight of God', in other words, 'lost existence in the love of God'. In line with this, Brunner evaluates that, for Calvin, this formal sense is equivalent to the remnant image of God and is 'of great importance' in Calvin's ethics: Brunner, "Nature and Grace", in *Natural Theology*, Emil Brunner & Karl Barth, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), pp.22-24, 35-44; Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics II: The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, (Cambridge: James Clark & Co, 1952), pp.57-61.

<sup>54</sup> Brunner, *Dogmatics II*, p.59.

<sup>55</sup> Karl Barth, "No, Answer to Emil Brunner", *Natural Theology*, pp.79-109.

Brunner's reading seems to be suggesting that communal love is possible since God's image continues to exist in humanity, despite the Fall. However, this position may be criticized for the lack of attention given to discussion of the existence of God's restored image in the elect through the gospel of Christ and the relevance of this to the spiritual common good of the church. On the other hand, Barth's reading seems to imply that communal love is possible because the relational character of God's image has been restored by the gospel of Christ. However, this position fails to explain how the surviving image of God is understood by Calvin, and does not discuss the relevance of the image of God for the social common good of humankind.

Despite the way in which the image of God is conceptualized by Brunner and Barth and their respective followers, an important omission on both their parts seems to be the issue of humanity's responsibility towards communal love. Calvin's understanding of social sanctification based on his doctrine of the communal image of God is a unique link that connects his theology and social ethics.<sup>56</sup> Yet, it seems that both Brunner and Barth do not give sufficient attention to the ethical implications arising from this communal character of God's image in humanity.<sup>57</sup>

In fact, one can argue that, for Calvin, the command to communal ethics – that one should love and care for all people – is more persuasive when it is understood from the communal perspective of the image of God in all humanity. Calvin demonstrates this in his commentary on Luke (1555), when he describes the human race as being neighbours with a divine bond of community.<sup>58</sup> Also, in his sermon on Corinthians 1:11-16 (1555), he maintains that 'when we see that God has created the human race in such a way that we are allied together and no one holds back where he can help but we contribute all we have our disposal *for the common good*, can we fail to be moved by such fellowship?'<sup>59</sup>

This theological-anthropological explanation of human solidarity ought to be linked to Calvin's exegesis of the story of God's creation, which prepares for the abundant

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<sup>56</sup> Ronald. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), pp.148-169.

<sup>57</sup> Regarding the primitive social order such as married life, family life, and social life, see Biéler, *The social humanism of Calvin*, pp.17-22; and *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, pp.205-207.

<sup>58</sup> Comm. *Luke*. 10:30, p.61; cited in Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.205.

<sup>59</sup> Sermon XIII on *1 Corinthians* 1:11-16; *Op, Calvin.*, XLIX (49), 740, cited in Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.206. Emphasis added.

common life of all living creatures: ‘He [God] furnished the world with all things needful, and even with an immense profusion of wealth, before he formed man’.<sup>60</sup> Thus, God does not only provide His substantial image within humanity in order to build a right relation between Himself and humanity, but also generously creates and supplies for humanity all resources necessary for human life itself. Consequently, the substantial character of God’s grace visibly manifests itself not only in God’s image in humanity but also in all other plentiful physical resources and creatures cohabiting with humanity who enjoy a common life. In this manner, one can see in Calvin’s writings an understanding of the communal character of God’s image in humanity.

How can Calvin’s view that God’s image in humanity is the ‘perfect excellence of human nature’ be explained from the communal perspective? To answer this question, it is useful to scrutinize Calvin’s understanding of God as ‘a common action of the three persons’, as God the Mediator ‘in common with us’, and as God the one fountain of all people.<sup>61</sup> Here, Calvin implicitly recognizes the solidarity of humankind as the reflection of God the Trinity, and Christ’s Incarnation provides the Christ-centred foundation for the unity of all humanity. Calvin also implies a form of common identity between all people, through their sharing God’s image and originating solely from God:

This blessing of God may be regarded as the source from which the human race has flowed...God could himself indeed have covered the earth with a multitude of men; but it was his will that we should proceed *from one fountain*, in order that *our desire of mutual concord* might be the greater, and that each might the more freely embrace the other as his own flesh.<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, he appears to indicate a theological anthropology of life as the pursuit of mutual assistance between people and the common good of all originating solely from God. Thus, the most significant proposition with regard to the communal character of God’s image as a theological premise is based upon God as the fountain.

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<sup>60</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 1:26, p.96. God’s abundant gift-giving story in His creation appears again on p.34.

<sup>61</sup> *Inst.* 1536, 2.11, p.68; 2.12, p.69.

<sup>62</sup> Douglass, “The Image of God in Humanity”, p.197; Cf. CO.23:47-9; Comm. *Genesis*. 1:28, p.97. Emphasis added.

In addition, for Calvin, the reiteration of the image of God in the creation of humanity demonstrates ‘a remarkable instance of the divine goodness’.<sup>63</sup> In particular, it is made manifest in humankind by ‘the conjugal bond’ between male and female created by God.<sup>64</sup> Calvin extends the creation story of Adam and Eve to include a sense of the solidarity implicit in the shared origin of all humankind and God’s intention in it for all; the language of God’s image appears within the mode of social community, with men and women being ‘companions’ for one another.<sup>65</sup> Calvin argues that the creation of humanity in God’s image points to a general principle: humanity was formed to be a social animal.<sup>66</sup> He accepts the thoughts of Plato, Seneca, and other secular philosophers regarding humanity as ‘social animal’ by natural instinct,<sup>67</sup> describing the conjugation of human beings as ‘the sacred bond’ combined as one body and soul. In his commentary on Genesis, he clearly emphasizes that the purpose of the divine design in creating woman is to cultivate a sense of mutual society between the sexes,<sup>68</sup> but one that particularly stresses the equal partnership on the basis of ‘mutual obligation’.<sup>69</sup>

Calvin’s commentary on I Corinthians further adds to what can be gleaned from his exegesis of Genesis 1-2. He suggests that the woman was created to be the companion of the man in terms of the dignity of the soul, such as innocence, holiness, and conscience for the eternal life. Nevertheless, in contrast to Genesis, he suggests here that woman is created at the same time to be helper and partner to support man for this present life as if a distinguished ornament.<sup>70</sup> Thus, Calvin appears to advocate that this communal perspective on God’s image in man and woman could be the most crucial aspect in fulfilling ‘the common law of man’s [humanity’s] vocation’ and in reproducing human society for the holy commonwealth.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.96.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p.97.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp.97-98.

<sup>66</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 2:18, p.128.

<sup>67</sup> See. 2.2.13.n56, p.272.

<sup>68</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 2:18, p.128.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.; Comm. *Genesis*. 2:18, pp.128-131.

<sup>70</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 11:7. See John Thompson’s method of differentiation between an *internal* image of God (an inner good of the soul) for the eternal life and an *external* image of God (visibly reflected in human relations) for this present life; in “Woman as the Image of God according to John Calvin”, *HTR*, 81:2 (1988), pp.132-34.

<sup>71</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 1:18, p.128. See also Thompson, “Woman as the Image of God”, pp.132-33.

Calvin's thoughts on God's image in both male and female therefore seem to involve the communal aspect of human society and its ethical aim: to pursue mutual communication towards a common purpose and excellence in everything good.<sup>72</sup> Consequently, the Fall of God's image in Adam coincides with the destruction of the original equal solidarity between male and female<sup>73</sup> as well as the loss of the ethical direction towards a well-regulated life among them.<sup>74</sup> For Calvin, the image of God in male and female<sup>75</sup> is the ethical foundation of the life for the common good as well as the subject and object of the love of the common good. The Fall of Adam and Eve is therefore regarded as the loss of God's image as a divine gift, which was given as the 'soil' for cultivating the common-good in human society.

Consequently, when Calvin presents the idea of God's image in humanity as divine endowment and gratuitous gifts,<sup>76</sup> one can conclude that he is stressing the practical application of God's image, whereby humanity is represented as 'God's vice-regent in the government of the world'.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, as briefly mentioned above, Calvin believes that humanity should engage in the divine benefits provided by a plentiful and 'diligent' God when they partake in God's image in themselves as His gift of grace.<sup>78</sup> This strengthens the communal ethical aspect in Calvin's thought on God's image in humanity.<sup>79</sup>

In sum, for Calvin, God's image in humanity in the time of creation is harmoniously designed, relationally, substantially, and communally, for the purpose of the holy commonwealth of humankind. God gives all necessary things to human beings as divine grace and gift; that is, His image, likeness, and abundant resources for all humanity. Consequently, human beings govern and manage all things in the universe before the Fall through the relational, substantial, and communal aspects of this divine image, thereby demonstrating God's self-manifestation. Calvin believes that 'an inner good of the soul' can be found in the original image of God in humanity at creation, which is later

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<sup>72</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 1:27, p.97; 2:18, pp.128-131.

<sup>73</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 3.16.

<sup>74</sup> *Sermon on Deuteronomy* 21:15-17; CO.27:663-70, See also John Witte Jr. and Robert M. Kingdon, *Sex, Marriage, and Family in John Calvin's Geneva*, vol. 1, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp.245-46.

<sup>75</sup> This issue will be revisited in chapter 6.

<sup>76</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 1:26, pp.93-96.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.94

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.99.

manifested in the restored image of God through salvation.<sup>80</sup> Thus, it is only by the fulfilment of the restored image of God through the gospel of Christ that the mission of the common good to love all human beings as part of God's image is achieved and its ethical implications made manifest.

### **2.3.2. After the Fall**

What of Calvin's view of God's image in humanity after the Fall and its implication for the common good? As was discussed in the previous section, there has been an ongoing debate regarding the relational and substantial character of God's image in humanity after the Fall. According to Barth and his followers, the relational aspect of the image of God is lost after the Fall and can be restored only in salvation by Jesus Christ, that is, special grace. On the other hand, according to Brunner and his followers, the substantial aspect of the image of God survived the Fall, albeit in damaged form, and is the basis for the wellbeing of humankind as common grace.<sup>81</sup> As a forerunner of Brunner, Bavinck argues that Calvin's theology retains the formula of recognizing the continuing 'traces of the image of God' as precious and splendid divine gifts by defining them as 'common grace'. According to Bavinck, Calvin includes in his understanding of the common grace not only reason, philosophy, music, arts, sciences, and nation state but even 'a feeling, a notion of the Godhead, a seed of religion'.<sup>82</sup> Thus, all these natural gifts are recognized as divine gifts kept for the present welfare of humankind. It may be, therefore, that Calvin's thoughts on God's command to love all people based on God's image in humanity can be clearly understood from this substantial and functional perspective of God's image in humanity. However, it is also important to consider the communal character of God's image in humanity within this context; how did Calvin conceptualize the status of this character post-Fall, in relation to the substantial and relational characters? Moreover, what implications did each character have for the common good?

Part of the difficulty in interpreting Calvin's understanding of the image of God in humanity is the fact that, within the early stages of his writing, he appears to argue that

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> 1.15.4, p.190.

<sup>81</sup> The discussion of the common grace as the foundation of the common good of humankind will be dealt with in more detail in chapter 6.

<sup>82</sup> Herman Bavinck, "Common Grace", *CTJ* 24.1, (1989), p.51.



this image is *completely* effaced after the Fall, whereas in his later writing, he seems to suggest that this image is *almost* effaced. This apparent difference in Calvin's thinking therefore deserves careful investigation. In his *Catechism* of 1538, he repeats his claim that the image of God is 'wiped out' (*ceste semblance de Dieu estant en nous esfacee*)<sup>83</sup> in Adam and all descendents after the Fall; they are 'deprived of all God's benefits and are stripped of all God's glory' because of their proud misuse of God's gift. Here, the lost image of God is primarily related to the relational character of God's image in humanity. This is manifest when one recalls that Calvin associates 'the very great excellence of his [humanity's] own nature' with the fact that 'he [humanity] might look up to their Author and might worship him with fitting gratitude'.<sup>84</sup> In addition, Calvin associates the loss of God's image with the powerlessness in every good work and a strengthened inclination to wickedness.<sup>85</sup> Here, one can suggest that Calvin highlights the loss of the relational character of God's image in humanity, and, as an inevitable result, he pays attention to the failure of humanity's participation in every good work. In Calvin's mind, it seems that the loss of the relational character after the Fall, represented as alienated humanity,<sup>86</sup> causes the image of God in humanity to be 'wiped out'. Thus, there seems to be little room for God's image in humanity to be devoted for the common good.

However, it appears that Calvin does not intend to present a radical outlook about the total depravity of humanity; he does not believe that 'the *imago Dei* itself has been lost through sin so that the very substance of man is nothing but sin'.<sup>87</sup> Thus, in his commentary on Genesis (1554), his interpretation of Genesis 9.6 pays attention to the role that God's image plays in supporting his command for the common good of humankind: 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God

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<sup>83</sup> *Catechism* 1537, OS 1:381.

<sup>84</sup> I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 9; OS 1:381.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Comm. *John*. 14:22. Heiko Oberman stresses that, in Calvin's paradigm shift from ontology to psychology, his main focus does not lie in the loss of 'substance' of humanity in terms of essence and existence but in the loss of 'orientation' by portraying created man as 'in communion with God' and fallen man as 'alienated from God'. Thus, the restoration of God's image in Christ is understood not as an 'ontological elevation' but as a 'psychological reorientation' by grace 'from miserable alienation to the pursuit of happiness'. See "The Pursuit of Happiness: Calvin Between Humanism and Reformation", *SHE* 19.2 (1993), pp.16-23.

<sup>87</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology I*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1978), pp.90, 114.

made he man'.<sup>88</sup> At this point, although Calvin gives no hint of what the remnant of God's image in humanity might be, he clearly elucidates that the image of God *has* remained in humanity after the Fall, and this alone provides good cause for God's careful involvement in humanity and humanity's responsibility to participate in and respond to God's grace. Calvin's doctrine of *imago Dei* makes humanity sincere about consideration for others.

This then leads to the question, what is the nature of the remaining image of God in humanity after the Fall? One may suggest that Calvin is claiming in his *Catechism* of 1538 and Commentary on Genesis 9:6 of 1554, that it is the substantial aspect which remained in humanity: although Calvin himself does not use the term 'relation' or 'substance' in order to differentiate these two characters. He confirms that God's image survived and remained in humanity, and this is why humans should treat each other with respect. In addition, he suggests that, in spite of the total depravity of humanity, the original purpose in God's creation has not been cancelled but, rather, continues. Thus, although God's image becomes dark and dim in humanity, it is never entirely obliterated, and so the human essence has not ceased to exist.<sup>89</sup> For this reason, humans are forbidden to kill each other.

However, this understanding of Calvin's thoughts is not without controversy and continues to be a source of scholarly debate. For example, Engel proposes that Calvin has a dual perspective of God as Father versus God as Judge in order to explain more clearly Calvin's apparently contradictory claims about the survival of the image of God in humanity after the Fall.<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, Zachman argues that the best way to describe these

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<sup>88</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 6:9.

<sup>89</sup> As Billings notes, Calvin's *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* demonstrates the difference between the substance of human nature understood as the goodness in a rightly oriented union with God and the accidental characteristics of sinful human nature in a secondary sense by using an Aristotelian distinction. Thus, in spite of this accidental sinful nature caused by the Fall, the substance of human nature is good, and the primal human nature such as human freedom can be restored only through union with Christ by the Spirit as is also suggested by Augustine. See J. Todd Billings, "John Milbank's Theology of the "Gift" and Calvin's Theology of Grace: A Critical Comparison", *MT* 21.1 (2005), p.95; John Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, ed. A.N.S. Lane and trans. G.I. Davies (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), pp.40-48, see also p.122, 'man does have a will to hand by nature, but one which is evil and cannot be good of itself or aspire to the good, and it is not annulled by the grace of God, so as not to exist, but it is corrected and turned from being evil, so as to be good'.

<sup>90</sup> Mary Potter Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), pp.42-57. Engel argues that the image of God is understood as both relational and substantial in Calvin's dynamic perspectival structure. She suggests that Calvin's anthropological

perspectives is to distinguish Calvin's thoughts on the blessing of this earthly life from his ideas on the blessing of eternal life.<sup>91</sup>

However, it may be suggested that one can approach these differing scholarly perspectives by appealing to the distinction Calvin makes between the common good of humankind based on common grace and the common good of the church based on special grace. Perhaps the tension in Calvin's apparently contradictory statements can be resolved when they are both approached using a common denominator, that is, the common good. Thus, the image of God remains in human beings with regard to the common good of humankind. However, the surviving lineaments of the image do not provide the power by which one is able to participate in the spiritual common good of the church, united with God, and in this sense only the restored image of God in Christ can contribute to the common good of the church. Therefore, Calvin's apparently contradictory claims on the loss of God's image and the surviving lineaments of God's image could be harmonized by the communal ethical implications of his understanding of the common good of the church and humankind based on God the Redeemer and God the Creator. This issue will now be explored in more detail.

For Calvin, after the Fall, there still exists a gift that has survived; that is, the evidence left of God's image, 'engraven on them', regardless of the loss of the spiritual attitude, in the form of a right relation with God. Though darkened and damaged, it becomes the foundation for human dignity, perhaps one of the ends of His original creation, and is positioned as the theological anthropology for the divine command towards the common good – to participate in the divine love towards all people.<sup>92</sup> As Calvin writes in his Commentary on Genesis 9:7, 'You [Noah and his sons] see that I [God] am intent upon cherishing and preserving mankind, do you therefore also attend to it'.<sup>93</sup> Thus, according to Gerrish, 'Calvin builds his social ethics partly on the endurance of the divine image even in fallen man... the image was not lost but remained regulative of

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structure takes on 'an intricate complex of a wide variety', determined by his double theological perspectives regarding the absolute perspective of God and the relational perspective of humankind (xi, p.1-2).

<sup>91</sup> Zachman, *Image and Word in Calvin* pp.453-54.

<sup>92</sup> Oberman highlights the optimistic side more than the pessimistic side of Calvin's psychology of human nature in terms of the secular utilitarian notion of human dignity and ability, which positively facilitates the enjoyment of life in this world. See "The Pursuit of Happiness", pp.21-26.

<sup>93</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 9:7, p.296; see also Comm. *Genesis*. 9:6.

man's social relationships'.<sup>94</sup> Calvin's understanding of the substantial image of God may therefore be said to involve the unceasing motivation toward the divine command to love each other and to realize the commonwealth.

Consequently, for Calvin, it is manifest that God's image cannot be entirely annihilated to the degree that it is impossible for humanity to love their enemies.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, if he compares the love of the worthless sinners and the love of fellow Christians, the image of God in the former must be the image post-Fall. Thus, one can suggest that, for Calvin, the image of God in all humanity after the Fall still remains to be respected *aside* from the restored image of God in believers. Though he does not clearly and systematically differentiate and define which particular character of God's image is found in believers and unbelievers, he nevertheless stresses that the image of God surviving after the Fall becomes a basis for 'the common good':

The Lord commands us to do good to all without exception; most of them are not deserving if we measure them according to their own merit. But scripture goes before us and exhorts us not to consider what people deserve in themselves but rather to consider God's image in all; we owe all honour and love to that image. Especially we should recognize it in the house-hold of faith, since it is renewed and restored in them by Christ's Spirit.<sup>96</sup>

Furthermore, in his commentary on the Gospel of John (1553), Calvin develops the double command: 1) to bestow love to all people based on the 'lineaments' of the image of God in creation despite its darkness after the Fall, since 'the goodness of God extends to the whole world'; and 2) to love all believers at the highest level 'with the greater warmth and affection' because this is the mutual exchange of love between those in whom the image of God has been restored.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Gerrish, "The Mirror of God's Goodness", p.110.

<sup>95</sup> *Inst.* 1541, p.690.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.689-90; also *Comm. James.* 3:9, pp.322-23, Here, Calvin relates God's command to bless neighbours to the substantial characteristic of God's image, such as 'many excellent endowments', which distinguish humanity from all other creatures, regardless of the loss of the relational image of God.

<sup>97</sup> *Comm. John.* 13:34, p.76.

Calvin's argument follows Paul's, in that whenever Calvin refers to the divine command of universal love, he highlights Christians' 'mutual exercise of love'.<sup>98</sup> This understanding directs one to Calvin's notion of the double aspect of believer-unbeliever, both for all humanity and for all Christians, and it becomes the double foundation of his theology of the common good. Christian love towards unbelievers becomes the regenerated foundation for the common good of humankind and love amongst believers becomes the foundation for the common good of the church. This is a subject to which Calvin frequently returns.

In his commentary on Acts 17:28 (1554),<sup>99</sup> Calvin concretely explains that the characters of 'reason and understanding' (*ratione et intelligentia*), given only to humanity, are the lineaments of God's image after the Fall. Hence, all humankind can be called to be the children of God. In Calvin, this 'pre-eminence in men [humanity]', which all other creatures do not possess, must be understood as a substantial character of God's image, the small portion of which has survived and remained 'amidst the miserable overthrow and ruins of the fall'.<sup>100</sup> He compares this to the relational character of the image of God, including 'the light of reason,<sup>101</sup> righteousness, and holiness', which was lost after the Fall and restored in 'the sons of God by faith [in Christ]' through the Spirit. Thus, it is obvious that the image of God that survived after the Fall is the substantial pre-eminence in humanity given as a result of the fatherly care of God, and thus, not completely deleted.<sup>102</sup>

In addition, in Calvin's commentary on Acts 17, one may notice the ethical implications of his thoughts on the substantial character of God's image when he mentions God's command toward all humankind to live a well-ordered common life. Calvin's statement that God allows all humanity to continue with a minimum degree of His image might be read as a theological anthropological premise for his idea on humankind's maintenance of the well-ordered common life under God's providential governance: 'Now, we see, as in a camp, every troop and band hath his appointed place, so men are placed

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.; Comm. *Galatians*. p.176. See Paul's Epistle to the Galatians 6:9-10: "And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all people, especially unto them who are of the household of faith".

<sup>99</sup> Comm. *Acts*. 17:28, pp.168-170; CO 48:417-8.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.; Comm. *Psalms*. 8:5, p.104.

<sup>101</sup> Importantly this is different from 'reason' on p.30 since the former is relational and the latter is substantial.

<sup>102</sup> Comm. *Acts*. 17:28, pp.168, 170; CO 48:417-418; Comm. *Psalms*. 8:5.

upon earth, that every people may be content with their bounds, and that among these people every particular person may have his mansion'.<sup>103</sup>

It is therefore important to remember that, when Calvin states that total depravity is primary to understanding his doctrine of God's image, his statement on the remains of God's image also deserves attention. For, there is an anthropological tension between loss and remainder: on the one hand, Calvin believed that the inner order of the soul, namely, 'an inner good of the soul, *imo interius animae bonum*',<sup>104</sup> as the relative image *coram Deo*, is totally depraved. On the other hand, however, the substantive image is not totally obliterated. In other words, both supernatural gifts of the soul – such as all qualities belonging to the blessed life – and most of the natural gifts – such as soundness of mind and uprightness – are stripped.<sup>105</sup> However, natural gifts such as reason and understanding,<sup>106</sup> though partly weakened and corrupted, are not completely wiped out or annihilated and still show the divine gifts unsteadily, contributing to the common good of mankind by the Spirit.<sup>107</sup>

Calvin uses the metaphor of architecture and its destruction in order to show the nature of this distorted but still remaining image of God: 'Hence the great obscurity faced by the philosophers, for they were seeking in a ruin for a building and in scattered fragments for a well-knit structure'.<sup>108</sup> In this analogy, Calvin seems to imply that the Fall damaged the building of humanity, the centre of which is now bombed and broken. Thus, its original centre has wholly disappeared, but there still seems to be something remaining in its surroundings. Thus, according to Schreiner, 'Calvin employs the notion of the

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<sup>103</sup> *Comm. Acts.* 17:26, p.165.

<sup>104</sup> 1.15.4, p.190, OS 3:181.

<sup>105</sup> CO 34:506, *Sermons on Job* 28:1-9, 'As men apply their intelligence to evil more easily than to doing good, our Lord must also punish them for having profaned His gifts...if we use this [intelligent and sharp] mind for fraudulent and evil purposes...we warp and twist what He had destined to be used not only for our salvation, but also for the common good of our fellow humans [*non seulement à nostre salut, mais au profit commun de nos prochains*]' [My translation.]

<sup>106</sup> Latin: *Intelligence*.

<sup>107</sup> 2.2.12, p.270; 2.2.16, p.275. According to André Biéler, Calvin makes use of Augustine's explanation: man's natural gifts for the present life have been corrupted by sin, and his supernatural gifts for the eternal life entirely withdrawn (2.2.12). See *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, pp.165-66.

<sup>108</sup> 1.15.8, p.195-196, considering 'fallen reason', Calvin criticizes the philosophers' metaphors of 'queen' or 'lamp', which is 'suffused with divine light', 2.2.2, pp.256-57.

“remnants” or the natural endowments of human nature, namely, the continuation of human society’.<sup>109</sup>

Here, one can raise the question of whether Calvin’s statement on ‘a sense of divinity’<sup>110</sup> or ‘the seed of religion’,<sup>111</sup> which is by nature retained and engraved in all human hearts, acts as a positive witness to the fact that the relational image of God is also still retained in humanity after the Fall. In other words, does Calvin’s statement that ‘there lies...a tacit confession of a sense of deity inscribed in the hearts of all’ run counter to his earlier statements upon the ‘wiped out’ relational image God?<sup>112</sup> Probably not. Although Calvin believes that, regardless of the Fall, ‘there is within the human mind, and indeed by nature instinct, an awareness of divinity’,<sup>113</sup> this ‘seed of religion’ never implies any assumption that the relational image of God, in the sense of the right relation with God, still survived in humanity even after their Fall. Rather, in Calvin’s mind, ‘they [hypocrites] entangle themselves in such a huge mass of errors that blind wickedness stifles and finally extinguishes those sparks which once flashed forth to show them God’s glory. Yet that seed remains which can in no wise be uprooted: that there is some sort of divinity; but this seed is so corrupted that by itself it produces only the worst fruits’.<sup>114</sup> That is, though the relational image of God itself is erased, the shadow of this image is retained in humanity in a negative way. Thus, for Calvin, ‘the seed of religion’ as ‘a certain understanding of his [God’s] divine majesty’<sup>115</sup> does not mean that humanity’s original relation with God remained in them in a positive form; rather, this seed remained in a negative form in order ‘to prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretence of ignorance’.<sup>116</sup> In Calvin’s mind, ‘the seed of religion’ contributes not to the religion of truth and its spiritual improvement

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<sup>109</sup> Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory*, p.72.

<sup>110</sup> 1.5.4, p.51. Unlike his negative metaphor of ‘the seed of religion’ observed in the context of salvation, Calvin keeps a somewhat positive sense to the metaphors of both ‘the seed of the laws’ and ‘the seed of political order’ in the context of general civil life. See 2.2.13, pp.272-73.

<sup>111</sup> 1.3.1, p.44.

<sup>112</sup> 1.3.1, p.44.

<sup>113</sup> 1.3.1, p.43.

<sup>114</sup> 1.5.4, p.51.

<sup>115</sup> 1.3.1, p.43.

<sup>116</sup> 1.3.1, p.43; also Comm. *Psalms*. 8:5. Calvin repeats this idea in his notion of ‘the principle of religion’. Thus, I do not agree with Tamburello’s re-identification of Calvin’s concept of ‘*sensus divinitatis*’ and ‘*conscientia*’ as ‘a point of contact with redeeming grace’ as in the case of Bernard of Clairvaux. See Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), pp.35-39.

but only to the non-genuine religions and spiritual degeneration.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, ‘the seed of religion’ as a form of ‘the common conception’, which deeply occupies and tenaciously inheres in the hearts and minds of all people, can never be used as a rebuttal to the assumption that the relational image may survive through the Fall for the spiritual common good.<sup>118</sup> Rather, Calvin’s metaphor of ‘the seed of religion’ must be recognized as demonstrating the fact that the relational image is wholly destroyed through the Fall, and therefore shows the impossibility of the genuine spiritual benefits within humanity.

At this point, it will be helpful to compare Calvin’s understanding of the relation between the image of God and the common good with the viewpoints of Luther and Augustine, in order to demonstrate Calvin’s more organised and developed ideas regarding both the substantial image and the relational image through an ethical perspective. In contrast to Calvin, Luther had a narrower view regarding God’s image in humanity. For Luther, the image of God manifests itself in Adam’s eternal and spiritual life before the Fall.<sup>119</sup> However, this image is destroyed in the Fall as the result of sin. According to Luther, the core of God’s image lies in the Christian life for God and neighbour based on the relational image; namely, he focuses on the superstructure of the spiritual life over the substructure of the physical life, looking through the lens of salvation rather than that of creation.<sup>120</sup> On the other hand, for Calvin, the remaining image of God is more carefully narrated through the lens of creation than it is in Luther’s writings. According to Calvin, in spite of human sin, a spark of God’s image still remains in humanity; for, unlike Luther, he views God’s image not only in the relational aspect, but broadly extends God’s image to include the substantive and communal aspect.<sup>121</sup> Thus, Calvin’s tripartite understanding of God’s image involves the unceasing motivation

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<sup>117</sup> 1.4.3, p.50.

<sup>118</sup> 1.3.1, p.44.

<sup>119</sup> See Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, pp.56, 62-65. Accordingly, humanity’s physical life, using the substantial character of God’s image, is regarded as the substructure of the spiritual life using the relational character of God’s image.

<sup>120</sup> Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, pp.64-65.

<sup>121</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 9:6, p.295; Comm. *James*. 3:9, pp.322-23; ‘There is no doubt that it was the design of God to provide for all his posterity. It was not therefore a private covenant confirmed with one family only, but one which is common to all people, and which shall flourish in all ages to the end of the world’. Ibid.



towards the life for the benefit of all people, namely, the commonwealth in human society.

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Turning now to the older Augustinian theological perspective on this issue, it is interesting to note that, for Augustine, the city of God is a historical reality inhabited by people who have the restored image of God through the work of Christ. Augustine's doctrine of humanity, especially his notion of *imago Dei*, is closely related to his notion of the heavenly city as an eschatological reality.<sup>123</sup>

Augustine sees humanity through two lenses: the relational aspect and the substantial aspect. Sin and Fall mean estrangement and restoration means returning.<sup>124</sup> In salvation, God's image is restored – intellectual capacity, volitional freedom, and divine grace<sup>125</sup> in Christ by the Spirit – so that humankind can participate in God's work. However, this restoration is not yet complete on Earth. Thus, believers are called to be children of God as well as children of the world.<sup>126</sup> Both God's ultimate purpose in creation and His image in humanity are partially realized in this life, and will be fully realized in the eternal life; this is an eschatologically integrated vision. Thus, one can say that Augustine has a historical view, including the partially realized love of humankind in this life and the fully realized love of humankind in eternal life. For Augustine, the restored image of God directs believers from 'the earthly city created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God' to 'the Heavenly city by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self'.<sup>127</sup> Thus, one may infer that the Heavenly city is based on self-denial for the common good in

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.; *Inst.* 1541(1539), p.690; *Comm. Galatians* 6:10, pp.180-81; *Sermons on Galatians*, 6:9-11, pp.616-631.

<sup>123</sup> Augustine's description of the loss of God's image does not mean its complete annihilation; rather, humanity has lost 'something', which was impressed on the human soul and received by God's grace of justice. See *De Genesi ad Litteram Libri Duodecim*, book6.XXVII.27, p.505, in *Oeuvres De Saint Augustin* Vol.48, trans. P. Agaësse and A. Solignac (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1972). Moreover, after this restoration, the believer loves eternal and spiritual attributes more than present and physical ones. See *De Trinitate (On The Trinity)*, book14.Ch.17.23, p.196, in *Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers* (NPNF) Vol.3, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1956). In this way, the restoration of God's image affects all areas of human life.

<sup>124</sup> Augustine, *Confessiones (The Confessions)*, book1.Ch.28, p.53, book2.Ch.6, p.56, book8, pp.116-128, (NPNF Vol.1).

<sup>125</sup> Augustine, *Tract De Doctrina Christina (On Christian Doctrine)*, Ch.22.20, p.744, (NPNF Vol.2); *De Spiritu et Littera (On the Spirit and the Letter)*, Ch.58, p.109, (NPNF Vol.5); *De Correptione et Gratia (Treatise on Rebuke and Grace)*, Ch.31-32, pp.484-485, (NPNF Vol.5).

<sup>126</sup> Augustine, *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione (On the Merits and Remission of Sins)*, Ch.7-9, pp.46-48, (NPNF Vol.5).

<sup>127</sup> St. Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Books, 1972), p.593.

eternal life and the earthly city is based on self-love for the private good in this present life. Furthermore, Augustine argues that the restored image of God in believers as the well-ordered soul rightly serving God is the sole basis for the social commonwealth in the earthly city, as well as in the Heavenly city. This restored image alone is able to build ‘justice’, ‘a common sense of right’, ‘the weal of the people’, and finally ‘commonwealth’ in human society.<sup>128</sup>

Thus, for Augustine, it is impossible for humankind to realize the commonwealth without their correct use of the restored relational character of God’s image, represented by ‘love’ and ‘justice’ between God and humanity and amongst ‘people’. This is the foundation of ‘commonwealth’ built by the ‘association of men united by a common sense of right and by a community of interest’.<sup>129</sup> Consequently, on the one hand, Augustine is similar to Calvin in that he generally associates *imago Dei* with the building-up of the commonwealth. On the other hand, Augustine is somewhat different from Calvin; whereas both link the relational character of the restored image of God to the commonwealth, Calvin also associates the recognition of the substantial character of God’s image with the command to love all people, forming the basis of the common good of humankind.<sup>130</sup> This latter idea does not appear to be given explicit voice in Augustine’s writings.

Rather, for Calvin, the people who lost the relational image might be recognized as potential recipients of the common good. Accordingly, all unbelievers, including pagans, have the potential to be objects of the command for the spiritual and social common good. Thus, what Calvin emphasizes here is the fact that one should admit ‘all offices of humanity’ – human reason and understanding and its resulting activity for the commonwealth based on God’s image that survived after the Fall – to *all* people, even to pagans. This is implied in the first edition of the *Institutes* (1536):

Consequently, though ecclesiastical discipline does not permit us to live familiarly or have intimate contact with excommunicated persons,<sup>131</sup> we ought nevertheless to strive by whatever we can, whether by exhortation and teaching or by mercy and gentleness, or by our own prayers to God, that they may turn to a more virtuous

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p.883.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p.890.

<sup>130</sup> 2.2.16, pp.274-75.

<sup>131</sup> The discussion in chapter 5, regarding the ministry of the Consistory of Calvin’s Geneva, will be a useful example of this theological anthropological perspective based on his tripartite understanding of God’s image.

life and may return to the society and unity of the church. And not only those are to be so treated, but also Turks and Saracens, and other enemies of religion. Far be it from us to approve those methods by which many until now have tried to force them to our faith, when they forbid them the use of fire and water and the common elements, when they deny to them all offices of humanity, when they pursue them with sword and arms.<sup>132</sup>

In addition, Calvin implies that humanity cannot tell who receives the restored image of God or who has received only the survived substantial image of God after the Fall.<sup>133</sup> Thus, believers have a social responsibility to use prayer, works of love, and almsgiving for all people, both to direct them towards the restored image of God and to help them at least to enjoy a communal life as the owner of the lineaments of God's image in themselves.

To sum up the discussion of Calvin's view of the image of God after the Fall, one may conclude that believers must love unbelievers, not only because of the substantial character of God's image, shared between them, but also because of the hope of unbelievers regaining the relational character of God's image in the future. Thus, for Calvin, the following are available as theological anthropological evidence for the common good: 1) the lost but restored relational character of God's image; 2) the surviving substantial character of God's image; 3) the restored communal character of God's image in the church by Christ; and 4) the communal character of God's image in humankind created by one Creator. The first two have been discussed above. The latter two will be discussed later in this chapter. Consequently, for Calvin, the image of God, either in the believer or the unbeliever, is a crucial basis for the life of the common good. First, it is central for believers in Christ, since on the one side, the relational image, which was lost at the Fall, is restored, and on the other side, the substantial image, which was severely damaged, is also significantly improved, allowing them to contribute to the common good of the church and humankind through the work of the Spirit.<sup>134</sup> Secondly, for the unbeliever, though the relational image is never restored and the substantial image

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<sup>132</sup> *Inst.* 1536, 2.28-29, pp.84-85.

<sup>133</sup> *Inst.* 1536, 2.29, p.85, Calvin teaches that 'while we are as yet uncertain of God's judgment, we are not allowed to distinguish individually those who belong to the church or not'.

<sup>134</sup> CO 28:598, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, 31:1-8, 'He [Moses] demonstrates first of all his weakness, because he was so old and broken that he was no capable of taking on such a difficult burden...he was aware that his health had not been given to him, but rather for the common good and for the salvation of all the people [*pour le bien commun, et pour le salut de tout le peuple*]'.

[My translation.]

is severely damaged, the latter still remains, allowing them to use it for the common good of humankind by the general grace of the Spirit.<sup>135</sup>

### 2.3.3. The recovery of God's image through Christ

Calvin clarifies that the annihilated image of God in humanity can be recovered through Jesus Christ.<sup>136</sup> As he states, 'Consequently, the beginning of our recovery of salvation is in that restoration which we obtain through Christ, who also is called the Second Adam for the reason that he restores us to true and complete integrity, *veram et solidam integritatem*'.<sup>137</sup> To Calvin, Christ is the most perfect (*très parfait*)<sup>138</sup> image of God: 'Since God has now revealed his majesty in Christ in total perfection' human beings come to have all His goodness.<sup>139</sup> In addition, Calvin says that when humanity is conformed to Christ by His grace, humans are truly transformed and God's image is restored in them.<sup>140</sup> This redemption can direct them to re-participation in God's eternal blessing represented by the 'fountain' in Calvin's Commentary on *Genesis*, 1:28, as discussed in the previous section, Before the Fall.<sup>141</sup> In his commentary on the Psalms (1557), Calvin describes this as follows:

But as the heavenly Father hath bestowed upon his Son an immeasurable fullness of all blessings, that all of us may draw from this fountain, it follows that whatever God bestows upon us by him belongs of right to him in the highest degree; yea, he himself is the living image of God, according to which we must be renewed, upon which depends our participation of the invaluable blessings which are here spoken of.<sup>142</sup>

What Calvin means by 'the image of God', by the synecdoche of 'righteousness and true holiness', is 'the perfection of our whole nature, *l'intégrité de toute la nature*', completely restored by Christ after being lost by the Fall. This restored image allows humanity to enjoy not only all the privileges and qualities of the first Adam but also to

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<sup>135</sup> 2.2.15-16, p.275.

<sup>136</sup> For a full demonstration of the living image of God in Jesus Christ, see Zachman, *Image and Word in Calvin*, pp.257-288.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p.189; OS 3:179.

<sup>138</sup> 1.15.4, p.190.

<sup>139</sup> *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, trans. Douglas Kelly (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), p.322.

<sup>140</sup> 1.15.4, p.189.

<sup>141</sup> pp.30-31.

<sup>142</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 8:5, p.104.

share in the superior status of Christ the second Adam.<sup>143</sup> Through Jesus Christ, by the work of the Spirit, who is the source of all that is good,<sup>144</sup> believers recover both the supernatural gifts such as ‘faith, love of God, and charity toward neighbour’<sup>145</sup> and the natural gifts such as ‘integrity of understanding and rectitude of the heart’.<sup>146</sup> As he emphasizes, ‘The measure of grace procured by Christ is much more ample than the measure of condemnation in which the first man involved the whole of humanity’.<sup>147</sup>

In addition, for Calvin, through the person of Jesus Christ, the restored image of God initiates a new community based on a common life with Christ.<sup>148</sup> The Christian new life in the restored image is fundamentally communal because all Christians have God as the common Father and Christ as the common head.<sup>149</sup> Calvin suggests that the image of God reappears in ‘the mutual exercise of love’ by the regenerated disciples with ‘the highest degree of brotherly love’.<sup>150</sup> Also, this new community in the gospel of Christ does not exclude some people but includes all people,<sup>151</sup> and all believers ‘are united in the fellowship of Christ on condition that they mutually communicate to each other all the blessings which God bestows upon them’.<sup>152</sup> Thus, Christ, as the true restoration of the mutual good life according to God’s image, is regarded as the foundation of the believer’s life for the common good. As Wallace rightly notes, Calvin ‘regards our sacrifice of self-denial as possible only through the grace of God in Christ. Because Jesus pioneered the way, and first gave, in our name and place, such a self-sacrifice to God, we now, through

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<sup>143</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 2:7.

<sup>144</sup> Comm. *Exodus*. 31:2, 6.

<sup>145</sup> 2.2.12.

<sup>146</sup> 2.3.2.

<sup>147</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 9:6; Comm. *John*. 5:15.

<sup>148</sup> *Inst.* 1541. IV; preface to the New Testament, in *Oeuvres choisies, Op. cit.*, 195, *Op. Calv.*, IX, 807; *Fourth Sermon on 1 Corinthians* 110:8f., *Op. Calv.* XLIX, 624.

<sup>149</sup> 4.1.2 and 3.

<sup>150</sup> Comm. *John*. 13:34, p.76.

<sup>151</sup> Preface to the New Testament, in *Oeuvres choisies, Op. cit.*, p.194, *Op. Calv.*, IX, p.807; CO 46:85-86, Calvin’s *Sermons on Luke* Ch 1, ‘To sum up, this shows us how our Lord Jesus Christ did not just come to be King of the Jews forever, but having come and shown himself to them, He wanted us to be joined with them in having access to such a treasure, that of being children and inheritors of God. In the same way, the Gospel is proclaimed everywhere, it is not for one nation alone, but God wanted it to be a common inheritance [*et que nous fussions les enfants et heritiers de Dieu, selon que l’Evangile aussi s’est publie par tout, et qu’il ne s’est point adresse seulement a une nation, mais que Dieu a voulu que ce fust un bien commun*] and he wanted to do away with these differences that had separated different peoples. In this way, Jesus Christ was a cornerstone’.

[My translation.]

<sup>152</sup> 4.1.3.

him and in him, have the power to repeat what he has done'.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, it may be inferred that the closer human beings come, through Christ, to the solidarity given as God's image, the more this image shines out in believers' common life in Christ. As Calvin states, 'The closer any man comes to the likeness of God, the more the image of God shines in him'.<sup>154</sup> Taking this a step further, as Quistorp notes, Calvin believes that in the consummation when God is seen in Christ, human beings are fully transformed into the image of God. Within this eschatological vision, Calvin stresses that 'the future good of perfect righteousness and blessedness' is already given to believers who participate in the eternal image of Christ; that is, His glorified body through their 'configuration of the body'. Thus, the image of Christ is not only a foundation and goal but also a guide for believers' hope for the consummative restoration of God's image.<sup>155</sup>

Consequently, it can be argued that, for Calvin, though the loss of God's image in the first Adam is the story of humanity's broken solidarity in terms of the eternal life, the story of humanity's temporal solidarity based on common nature as God's image in humanity still continues from the perspective of the present life. One can therefore finally hear the story of the restoration of God's image in Christ, the second Adam, as the story of the perfect restoration of eternal solidarity between God and humanity and its outworking in the remarkable improvement of the temporal solidarity among humans.<sup>156</sup>

#### **2.4. The relational and substantial perspective on human nobility and dignity**

For Calvin, as for Luther, there is no better description of human dignity than the fact that humanity was created in God's image to have dominion over all other living creatures.<sup>157</sup> Stauffer, a follower of Bruner, notes how Calvin understands human nobility and dignity as being formed at birth. According to Stauffer, Calvin, in his eleventh sermon on Job, clearly states that all human creatures receive in themselves the image of God; that

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<sup>153</sup> Wallace, *Geneva*, p.192.

<sup>154</sup> 3.3.9, p.601.

<sup>155</sup> Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, p.20-22, 172; Willem Van't Spijker stresses that, in the kingdom of Christ, both internal and eschatological natures of salvation are brought to the fore in the hidden working of the Spirit. See Willem Van't Spijker, "The Kingdom of Christ according to Bucer and Calvin", in *Calvin and the State*, ed. Peter De Klerk (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Calvin Studies Society, 1993), pp.118-19.

<sup>156</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, pp.162-182, 220-24.

<sup>157</sup> 1.15.3. p.188.

is, the nobility and dignity of humanity formed similarly to their creator.<sup>158</sup> Does human dignity then originate from the relational or the substantial aspect of *imago Dei* as a hallmark, which God has stamped on every human being?

In considering the relational aspect, and expanding on Barth's point above, Niesel suggests that, for Calvin, God's image means a right spiritual attitude, a fixed obedience, a freedom, a right relation with God, and a right attitude towards all other creatures.<sup>159</sup> Meanwhile, Torrance proposes that, for Calvin, God's image is perceived as humanity's response to God or a spiritual reflection (*bonum internum*), rather than any natural property of the soul (*bonum adventitium*).<sup>160</sup> These two readings both stress that Calvin's understanding of *Imago Dei* mainly represents humanity's right attitude or reflective obedience to God, rather than any physical reality or substance within humanity.<sup>161</sup> This Barthian Christ-centred understanding of God's image as humanity's dynamic relationship with God could be compromised<sup>162</sup> when it is considered as an objective reality in humanity according to Calvin's Spirit-centred viewpoint.<sup>163</sup> Certainly, the Barthian Christ-centred interpretation is constructive in explaining both the perfect image of God represented in Christ and the restored image of God within believers through Christ for the spiritual common good of the church. However, this idea may restrict any kind of active theological presupposition toward the social commonwealth beyond the boundary of the church.

However, it may be argued that when Calvin uses the metaphor of a mirror,<sup>164</sup> he does not overlook the fact that humanity's physical reality shows sparks of God's image.<sup>165</sup> He uses the metaphor of the mirror *both* for Christ as the living image of God the redeemer *and* for God the creator's image as reflected in humanity's natural gifts and

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<sup>158</sup> Richard Stauffer, *Dieu, la création et la Providence dans la prédication de Calvin*, (Bern, Frankfurt am Main Las Vegas: Peter Land, 1978), p.202.

<sup>159</sup> Wilhelm. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, Trans. Harold Knight (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1956), pp.67-69, 83-88, 126-129. Hereafter abbreviated into *Calvin*.

<sup>160</sup> Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, pp.52, 53, 73.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.* p.52.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.* pp.52-62, 73-75.

<sup>163</sup> See 2.2.16; see also *Sermon on Job 5:20*.

<sup>164</sup> Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, pp.39, 42; *Sermon on Job 10:7f*; *Institutes*, 1559, 2.12.6: 'Man was created therefore in the image of God, and in him the Creator was pleased to behold as in a mirror His own glory' (quoted in Torrance, p.42).

<sup>165</sup> 1.5.3.

faculties by the Spirit.<sup>166</sup> For Calvin, the structure of the human body, as the workmanship of God, is like an instrument to reveal divine wisdom;<sup>167</sup> he further extends ‘the mirror of divinity’ metaphor as God’s image to all creatures as well as to ‘the skilful ordering of the universe,’<sup>168</sup> which is manifested as ‘the theatre of the divine glory’ beyond the substantial image of God in humanity.<sup>169</sup>

Secondly, underlining the substantial aspect as reality, Stauffer uses his analysis of Calvin’s sermons on *Job* to suggest that God’s image is a reality given by the Spirit, ‘*imprime en nous son image*’, to every created human, regardless of the work of Christ as the basis of ‘*la noblesse et dignité*’ of all people.<sup>170</sup> According to Stauffer, Calvin understands God’s image as a general and objective reality, associated with the concept of *creatio continuata*, endowed from birth, and common in all people.<sup>171</sup> Thus, for Calvin, God’s image in all leads to the idea of the common nature in humanity, and is the cause of mutual love and charity toward all people. Here, the common nature in humanity involves not only a dynamic relation with God in human souls but also a physical reality within them.

Accordingly, one can conclude that, for Calvin, the objects of the common good of humankind include material charity and physical care, regardless of the spiritual nobility of humankind.<sup>172</sup> As a result, one may suggest that Calvin’s attention to God’s image given to all people as the substantial talent and reality can form a vital theological

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<sup>166</sup> 3.22.1; 3.25.3; 4.8.5. Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man*, pp.35-37, 53-54.

<sup>167</sup> 1.5.2.

<sup>168</sup> 1.5.1; Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man*, pp.35-37, 53-54; Comm. *Hebrews*. 11:3. Susan Schreiner stresses that, for Calvin, regardless of God’s hiddenness caused by historical disorder, the natural order can be a visible (or at least a glimpsed) locus where divine providence, wisdom, and goodness are open, seen, tasted, and contemplated by humanity. In Susan Schreiner, “Calvin as an interpreter of *Job*”, in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.71-75.

<sup>169</sup> Comm. *Hebrews*. 11: 4, p.266. It is interesting to note Calvin’s similar language and imagery in 1.5.2. pp.53-54; 1.3.3; 1.3.1. p.43: ‘the inclination toward religion springs as from a seed’; also 1.5.1. p.52: ‘unmistakable marks of his glory’; 1.5.3. p.55: ‘a clear mirror of God’s works is in humankind’.

<sup>170</sup> Stauffer, *Dieu, la création et la Providence*, pp.199-205; CO 33:143. Cf. *le 12<sup>e</sup> sermon sur Job*, CO 33:153, *le 22<sup>e</sup> sermon sur Job*, CO 33:280.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p.202.

<sup>172</sup> *Sermon on Deuteronomy*, 1<sup>st</sup> sermon, 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, p.62.



anthropology for understanding his thoughts on the social common good, along with the ecclesial common good.<sup>173</sup>

In terms of Calvin's theology of the common good, as has been shown, thoughts on the relational, substantial, and therefore the communal reality of God's image are essential. Thus, in Calvin, one may draw the following inferences that, on the one hand, his idea about the knowledge of God the redeemer primarily directs humanity to give their 'particular regard to the house of faith' for the common good of the church. Meanwhile, on the other hand, his thought about the knowledge of God the creator who imprints His image in all primarily directs humanity to 'do good to all men' for the common good of humankind.<sup>174</sup>

For Calvin, believers do not live a life of service to the church but towards the world through the church. Thus, in order for believers to live their common life in Christ within and beyond the church, the relational aspect of God's image must first be restored in them. Furthermore, it is also significant for them to recognize and direct the surviving substantive aspect, presenting a universal reality and talent, thereby showing human dignity based on a common nature distinct from other creatures, for the glory of God and the commonwealth of human society.

In conclusion, it may be suggested that, in Calvin's theological anthropology, the inherent dignity and nobility within humanity lies not only in a dynamic relation with God but also in the substantial reality of God's image itself, as noted by Stauffer. Accordingly, human dignity, in terms of the dynamic relation with God, becomes a theological anthropological cornerstone of the believer's commonwealth as the common good of the church. On the other hand, human nobility in terms of divine reality becomes another theological anthropological cornerstone of all people's public good forming the common good of humankind.<sup>175</sup>

However, as mentioned above, for Calvin, the restoration of the glory of God's image in the mirror of creation can never be possible without the endowment of God's image for 'true and substantial integrity', restored in humanity by Christ, 'the second Adam'. He is

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<sup>173</sup> 2.2.16, p.275. This will be dealt with in depth in chapter 5.

<sup>174</sup> Comm. *Galatians*. 6:10, p.180; 3.7.6.

<sup>175</sup> Comm. *Galatians*. 6:10.

the ‘most perfect’ mirror of God’s image by virtue of being the giver of life to creation as well as the renovator of eternal life to believers.<sup>176</sup> In this manner, Christ saves humanity to make them new creatures thorough His special grace and sustains the life of the world through His general grace.<sup>177</sup> Accordingly, it is clear that the commonwealth of humankind and the full restoration of creatures should be presupposed and sustained by the building-up of the common good of the church. For, as Calvin states, ‘the saints are gathered into the society of Christ on the principle that they should share with one another all the gifts which God confers upon them’<sup>178</sup> and thus ‘the nature of the kingdom of Christ is that it every day grows and improves’, both within and outwith the church.<sup>179</sup>

## 2.5. The ethical implications of God’s image in all humanity

When illuminated from its ethical perspective, Calvin’s doctrine of the image of God can be said to contribute to his theology of the common good. In other words, his thoughts on God’s image function as a theological and ethical co-foundation for his thoughts on the common good.

First, Calvin sets the foundation of love for one’s neighbours in ‘the image of God in all men’, so that there should be no limit or exception in ‘doing good’.<sup>180</sup> Works of love should be distributed to all humanity regardless of their inherent goodness.<sup>181</sup> Calvin argues that love of one’s neighbour must be dependent upon looking to God.<sup>182</sup> He proposes that the substantial image of God provides sufficient reason for the mutual love of all humankind. With this in mind, Wallace suggests that, for Calvin, the love of one’s

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<sup>176</sup> 1.15.4.

<sup>177</sup> Biéler, *Calvin’s Economic and Social Thought*, p.198; Sermon XLII on *Ephesians* 5:31-33, CO 51:780. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

<sup>178</sup> 4.1.3.

<sup>179</sup> Comm. *Philippians*. 2:10; *Ephesians*. 1:20-23; *Colossians*. 1:14-20; As Pete Wilcox analyzes, in Calvin’s exposition of the Prophets one can see that the restoration of the church, united with the progress of the kingdom of Christ, means not only its proper restoration to an ‘original condition’ but also its consummation in Christ through history with a fundamentally eschatological and evangelical tone aimed at the renovation of the whole world. See Peter Wilcox, “Calvin as commentator on the Prophets”, in *Calvin and the Bible*, pp.124-130.

<sup>180</sup> 3.7.6, pp.696-97.

<sup>181</sup> For Wolterstorff, ‘fundamental to Calvin’s reflections on poverty was his conviction that every human being has been made in the image of God’. See *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1981), p.78. I will deal with Wolterstorff’s evaluation of Calvin’s concept on God’s image as a common ground in human nature and its implication within the context of the socio-economic common good in chapter 6.

<sup>182</sup> 3.7.6, pp.696-97.

neighbour is basically attributable to the remaining image of God. As he states, ‘Even though, through the Fall, the image of God has become so horribly distorted as to be unrecognizable, nevertheless a Christian must regard all men as being created in and indeed as possessing the image of God. This consideration is basic in determining the attitude of the Christian to his fellow men in general’.<sup>183</sup> Calvin underlines the believer’s responsibility towards all people, having been created in God’s image; this is the ethical foundation presented in Calvin’s theology of creation and general revelation. This can be an anthropological foundation, not only for the believer’s life of self-denial for the common good of the church (*Institutes*, 3.7.5), but also for the mutual provision of the gifts of the Spirit for the common good of humankind (*Institutes*, 2.2.16). Here, it is important to remember the fact that, for Calvin, believers’ liberal almsgiving is compared to holy sacrifice, as if it were a gift proffered to God.<sup>184</sup> He explicitly states that ‘the similitude sacrifices ... the exercise of love [*caritatis officium*] which God demands of us is not merely bestowed upon men, but is also a spiritual and sacred service [*cultum*] performed to God’.<sup>185</sup> Regarding this, McKee explains that, in Calvin’s mind, ‘almsgiving is the proper expression of giving to God in ordinary service or worship...almsgiving...[is] the Christian sacrifices of sweet odour on the altar of the poor’.<sup>186</sup> In a similar vein, Pattison manifests that for Calvin, believers’ material almsgiving to the poor should be regarded as the appropriate vessel for authenticating their spiritual worship to God.<sup>187</sup> On the other hand, any victim of human cruelty and wickedness is regarded as making both

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p.149.

<sup>184</sup> Elsie McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving*, (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1984), pp.242-46. This will be explained by examining more detailed cases in chapter 5, ‘Office and Property for the common good of the church’, and chapter 6, ‘The philanthropic common good designed for Geneva’; CO 27:431, *Sermons on Deuteronomy* 16:20-22, 17:1, ‘We must also give back to God everything He has given us, for example, in the case of almsgiving, each person should return the gifts that they have received for the common good of the Church [*au profit commun de l'Eglise*]. These are sacrifices that are fragrant offerings’. [My translation.]

<sup>185</sup> Comm. *Philippians*. 4:18 (CO 52:66) quoted in McKee, p.245. See also Comm. *Romans*. 16:16 (CO 49:287). With regard to the sacrifice of sweet odours, see Comm. *Exodus*. 25:2, *Isaiah*. 23:18, *Matthew*. 5:23, *Luke*. 3:10.

<sup>186</sup> McKee, p.244; McKee, Biéler, Scholl, and Pattison demonstrate that Calvin’s ecclesiology contains the idea that the gifts of almsgiving to the poor are a decisive vehicle in fulfilling the right worship to God. See Biéler, *Calvin’s Economic and Social Thought*, pp.304-09, Hans Scholl, ‘The Church and the Poor in the Reformed Tradition’, *ER* 32 (1980), pp.243-45, Bonnie Pattison, *Poverty in the Theology of John Calvin*, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2006), pp.309-345. Regarding the sacrifice of sweet odour, see Comm. *Exodus*. 25:2, *Isaiah*. 23:18, *Matthew*. 5:23, *Luke*. 3:10, etc; listed in McKee, p.244.

God feel wounded and the worship of Christ neglected, since for Calvin, ‘that human beings bear God’s image means that God sees himself in our victimized co-human’.<sup>188</sup>

Furthermore, Calvin sets forth the foundation of the ethical and practical aspects of the believer’s compassion and responsibility towards all people drawn from humankind’s ‘mutual communication’ (*mutual communication*)<sup>189</sup> based upon their ‘common nature, which should be a mutual bond of love and brotherhood’<sup>190</sup> and a ‘sacred fellowship (*societas sancta*)’ between all men.<sup>191</sup> As he suggests in his first sermon on Deuteronomy ‘there [is] a certain common kindred in general, which is that all men ought to think how they be fashioned after God’s image, and that there is one nature common among them all’.<sup>192</sup>

To Calvin, these two fundamental facts – that all humans are created in God’s image and that, and as a result, all humans share a common nature – are the theological anthropological foundations of all Calvin’s teaching about human relationships for the commonwealth. It is an ‘order of nature’, applicable not only to believers but also to non-believers. According to Calvin’s sermons on Galatians, the motivation to practice universal love towards all humankind, in line with ‘nature’s own pattern’,<sup>193</sup> is not rooted in humanity itself but in the divine creative event where God unites all humanity with His image to form the sole and common nature. Thus, every human being has a highly qualified right to be loved by all others only because they are born into humanity and nobody can be excluded from receiving the universal common good. As humans, all are recognized as the mirror reflecting God’s image in them; therefore, from this foundation begins the ethical responsibility for the common benefit of all people. As Calvin instructs:

We are not to consider what each person is like, or what he deserves; we must rise above this and realise that God has placed us in this world to the end that we might be united and joined together. Since he has stamped his image upon us, and since

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<sup>187</sup> Pattison, *Poverty*, pp.323-24, 333-34; 3.7.5, p.696; Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.149.

<sup>188</sup> McKee’s summarization of Wolterstorff, in “The Wounds of God: Calvin’s Theology of Social Injustice”, *RJ* 16 (1987), pp.14-22; see also McKee, “Reception of Calvin’s Social and Economic Thought”, in *John Calvin Rediscovered*, pp.74-75.

<sup>189</sup> Comm. *Matthew*. 5:43, p.304.

<sup>190</sup> *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, first Sermon, p.10

<sup>191</sup> Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.148.

<sup>192</sup> *Sermon on Deuteronomy*, 1<sup>st</sup> sermon, 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, p.62.

<sup>193</sup> *Sermons on Galatians*, 6:9-11, p.618.

we share a common nature, this ought to inspire us to provide for one another. The one who seeks to be exempt from the care of his neighbour is disfiguring himself and declaring that he no longer wishes to be a man...we must see our own faces reflected, as by a mirror, in the faces of the poor and despised...even if they are people who are most alien to us.<sup>194</sup>

However, Calvin does not make this proposal only within the scope of the theology of creation and the revelation of nature to the exclusion of the theology of salvation. In *Institutes*, 3.7, Calvin makes a statement on the universal love of all humankind installed in God's image in the context of self-denial as the sum of the Christian life. Calvin extols the biblical teaching of universal love, saying, 'We are not to consider that men merit of themselves but to look upon the image of God in all men, to which we owe all honour and love. However, it is among members of the household of faith that this same image is more carefully to be noted'.<sup>195</sup>

For Calvin, the common good of humankind and the common good of the church can be distinctive but inseparable since the former is principally understood in the context of the latter. He believed that the created image of God in humanity designed for eternal life and the present life is related to the common good of humankind before the Fall. Moreover, the surviving image of God reserved for the present life is related to the common good of humankind after the Fall. Finally, the restored image of God redesigned for the eternal life in Christ is related to the common good of the church and its outworking for humankind. It is interesting to note that Calvin often highlights God's image in believers as a presupposition for their commitment to mutual communication for the common good of the church just after he comments on God's image in unbelievers as the reason behind believers' commitment to doing good for all neighbours for the common good of humankind.<sup>196</sup>

In his commentary on Galatians 6:10, Calvin suggests that both a common human nature and the tie of the sacred relationship are open to each other, rather than closed, since the image of God the creator and the image of God the redeemer are both images of the same God.<sup>197</sup> Thus, Calvin criticizes the scribes' limited designation of the word

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<sup>194</sup> *Sermons on Galatians*, 6:9-11, pp.624-25.

<sup>195</sup> 3.7.6, p.696.

<sup>196</sup> *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, first sermon, 10; 3.7.6, p.696; *Comm. Galatians*. 6:10; *Sermons on Galatians*, 6:10, pp.624-631.

<sup>197</sup> *Comm. Galatians*. 6:10, p.181.

‘neighbour’ as benevolent persons, comparing it with Christ’s openness towards ‘the whole human race’ and with God’s authorship of human unity.<sup>198</sup> Accordingly, for Calvin, the fellowship of believers in the church cannot be diminished to a self-closed community, but must leave itself open to universal love and charity. Regarding this, as Wallace notes, Calvin ‘is talking about our “neighbour” in the Church pew and in the city street in the one breath’.<sup>199</sup> With this in mind, Calvin urges the exchange of the fullness of love and charity between community members, as God’s image in all deserves to be respected by everyone, regardless of individuals’ good or evil deeds.<sup>200</sup>

Since Calvin sets forth the ethical cause of the love of one’s neighbours as God’s image in all, his ethics are not regarded as the communication of human love but of divine love. Thus, Calvin’s thoughts on the remaining image become the absolute and unceasing foundation of communal ethics; as he says, ‘the image of God in them, which cancels and effaces their transgressions, and with its beauty and dignity allures us to love and embrace them’.<sup>201</sup> In other words, for Calvin, the remainder of the substantial image of God, despite the corruption of the relational aspect of this image, becomes the foundation of the universal ethical command.<sup>202</sup>

Furthermore, in his commentary on Matthew 5:45, Calvin describes the divine participation in human affairs by the notable feature of the divine kindness common to all – God making his sun to rise and sending rain on the just and the unjust. Calvin also sets forth divine participation in all people’s commonwealth as the basis, pattern, and dynamic of the believer’s participation; as he writes, ‘He [God] quotes two instances of the divine kindness toward us, which are not only well known to us, but common to all: and this very participation excites us the more powerfully to act in a similar manner towards each other’.<sup>203</sup>

Consequently, as is shown by the composition of *Institutes* 3.7. (1559), both Calvin’s theological-anthropological premise that everyone is created in God’s image and his

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<sup>198</sup> Comm. *Matthew*. 5:44, p.304.

<sup>199</sup> Wallace, *Geneva*, p.127. An in-depth analysis of Calvin’s definition of ‘neighbour’ will be carried out in chapter 3.

<sup>200</sup> 3.7.6, p.696.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Comm. *Matthew*. 5:45, p.307.

universal-ethical premise that God is kind to all people on Earth are put forward as the divine bases and dynamics to overcome human selfishness and to communicate God's 'justice and equity'. For Calvin, in his sermon on Micah 7:1-3, the believer's love towards his or her neighbour functions as a 'witness' to both God's image in all and His 'kindness and goodness toward mankind, and his concern for their well-being and needs'.<sup>204</sup> In other words, human beings witness that they have the image of God, 'as his children',<sup>205</sup> not only when they are the recipients of universal love but also when they become the active subjects of such universal love for their neighbours; this is the double witness of God's image in humanity.

In conclusion, one can suggest that, on the one hand, Calvin, as a theologian writing during a time of doctrinal sensitivity, heresy,<sup>206</sup> and excommunication, had to build his theology of the image of God upon a Christ-centred anthropology. Also, as a reformer, he focused his attention on responsible activity within the historical context of sixteenth century Geneva. On the other hand, one must remember that Calvin, writing at a time of human inequality and a lack of social welfare, education, and healthcare, stressed the significance of the universal social ethic upon his creation-centred anthropology and the implications of God's image in all.

Calvin is aware that the vestiges of God's surviving image can become the basis of universal love. However, although this love is bestowed to all humanity as a divine command, it does not mean that the competence to carry out such universal love is also effectively given and restored in all humankind. This capacity is primarily and effectively restored and improved in believers in Christ by the Spirit. The believer, through divine empowerment, serves both believers and unbelievers. As a result, two ethical guidelines are bestowed upon them: first, the active ethical guideline should teach the believer to love

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<sup>204</sup> *Sermons on Micah*, 25th, 7:1-3, p.374.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> See *Annales Calviniani* of 1539, 'The four preachers have brought a heretical book, printed under false pretences in this town [Genève] in contravention of the honour and the general good of the town and its citizens [*contre l'honneur et bien public de laz ville et de tous cieulx*] and all those who have faith in God. We resolved to find Gerard, the printer said to have printed this book in order to find out who was the first person to have promoted the said book', [my translation], CO 21:246.

all people regardless of their faith, since they all have God's image. Secondly, the passive ethical guideline teaches them not to harm or show contempt to anyone.<sup>207</sup>

In addition, one may conclude that the twofold nature of Calvin's ethics towards the common good of the church and humankind is the result of the dual complexity of Calvin's awareness of both the Christ-centred divine image formed through the knowledge of God the Redeemer and the Spirit-centred divine image formed through the knowledge of God the Creator.

## Conclusions

At the start of this chapter, we discussed the fact that, since Calvin's notion of God's image in humanity is understood as both reflective and universal grace of divine goodness, one may suggest that his notion of the common good can also be recognized not only at moral level but also at divine level: Calvin uses both implicit and explicit theological loci in his process to bring God's image to the forefront as the ontological foundation for the ethical communal life. With this in mind, this chapter has looked at the nature of the theological-anthropological foundation of Calvin's notion of the common good. It has examined Calvin's understanding of the tripartite nature of the image of God: the relational, substantial and communal aspects, and how these can be linked with the ecclesial and social aspects of the common good. It has shown that the tripartite nature of God's image in humanity before the Fall reflects God's original design in creation, with the goal of a mutual form of communication that benefits everyone and works for the good of all. It has also shown that, post-Fall, the substantial and communal aspect of the image of God in humanity survived, becoming the motive for the divine command to love and care for all humanity and to live together peacefully and in unity for the common good in this present life. However, although the divine command to love all humanity has been given, it does not mean that the ability is there – this must come through a joining with Christ. Calvin never gives voice to the belief that the common good of humankind might be partially but remarkably achieved in this present life and fully realized in the eternal life *without* the grace of salvation through Christ and its various spiritual gifts, even though he believes that God left the divine sense and the natural gifts in unbelievers for the common good of humankind. It is only through the restored image of God in Christ that its ethical

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<sup>207</sup> These active and passive ethical guidelines will be illustrated further in chapter 4.



implications are manifest. In light of this, this chapter has continued to examine how, for believers, the restored integrity of a right relationship with God and neighbours in Christ, along with the improved substantial aspect of God within them, is regarded as a new Christ-centred ontological participation in the divine empowerment to realize the common good of the church and humankind. Therefore, given the above understanding of the tripartite nature of God's image with its complex relation to both social and ecclesial levels within his notion of the common good, the following chapter will consider Calvin's main concerns regarding sanctification, especially Christian self-denial and freedom, and how these become a vital foundation for the realization of the common good, not only in its ecclesial dimension but also its social dimension.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **SANCTIFICATION AND THE COMMON GOOD**

The previous chapter reached the conclusion that, for believers, the restored relational, substantial, and communal aspects of God's image within them form the basis of their Christian love towards all people. This chapter will consider how this relates to Calvin's understanding of the believer's sanctified life for the common good of the church and humankind, with specific reference to Christian self-denial and freedom. There will be a discussion of the way in which the believer, as the restored image of God in Christ, receives the power of sanctification to live a life of self-denial, following the model of Christ's life in the work of the Holy Spirit.

This chapter will be devoted to elucidating Calvin's thoughts on the common good in his doctrine of self-denial. Though we may address Calvin's views on the common good in his doctrine of Christian freedom in the latter part of this chapter, we will not do so yet, since Calvin's idea of Christian freedom in terms of the common good can be better understood in relation to 'the third use of the Law in Christ' rather than alongside Christian self-denial as the sum of sanctification. Consequently, we will be able to understand Calvin's focus on the nature and function of Christian self-denial and freedom in terms of both the common good of the church and the edification of neighbours. In particular, to better understand Calvin's thoughts on the common good in terms of believers' sanctification, there will be a focus on the abundant functions of self-denial, as follows.

#### **3.1. Christian Self-denial for the Common Good**

Within Calvin's theological writings, Christian self-denial undoubtedly carries great significance. For example, he writes to Caracciolus in the foreword of his commentary on Corinthians, stating, 'Above all things, I should wish that all resembled you in that first of all excellences – self-denial'.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in his commentary on Isaiah 66.2, Calvin states

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<sup>1</sup> Comm. *Corinthians I*, the author's second epistle dedicatory, p.36.

that ‘God prefers his sacrifices to all others, when believers, by true self-denial, lie low in such abasement as to have no lofty opinion about themselves, but to permit themselves to be reduced to nothing’. One can see that, as Pattison suggests, ‘for Calvin, self-denial is an ever-present understanding that one belongs to his or her God, not to oneself’.<sup>2</sup> Thus, there is nothing more important than self-denial in Calvin’s doctrine of religious life.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, one could argue, like Pattison, that for Calvin, self-denial is not only fundamental to the life of the individual Christian; it is also intrinsic to the believer’s relationships with both God and neighbour.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the significance of the believer’s self-denial moves beyond individual ethics to embrace communal ethics.

It would also appear that, for Calvin, self-denial is the opposite of self-love. He believed that inordinate self-love, as the main characteristic of the sinner, can be removed only through union with Christ. That is, the life of self-denial necessary for living one’s life for one’s neighbour comes from the newness of life in Christ.<sup>5</sup> Only believers united with Christ are given double grace: justifying grace and sanctifying grace, and it is through sanctifying grace that believers receive the gift of self-denial.<sup>6</sup> Believers’ self-denial can be understood not only as the decisive event resulting from their union with

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<sup>2</sup> Pattison, *Poverty*, p.198.

<sup>3</sup> Robert A. Peterson, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Atonement*, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing company, 1983), p.79.

<sup>4</sup> Pattison, *Poverty*, p.197, See Comm. *Matthew*. 16:24, pp.303-4; CO 45:481.

<sup>5</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 45:10, p.189, ‘to deny ourselves is the beginning of that sacred union which ought to exist between us and Christ’; Guenther H. Haas, *The Concept of Equity in Calvin’s Ethics*, (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), p.63.

<sup>6</sup> 3.11.11, p.739; 3.11.14, p.744. For Calvin, justification and sanctification, as the double grace for salvation, are like the two branches rooted in a common root, that is, ‘the redemptive work of Christ’ such as death and resurrection. This ‘tandem’ grace resolves humanity’s ‘double plight’ composed of guilt (in the forensic-legal sphere) and corruption (in the personal-ethical sphere). See Jonathan H. Rainbow, “Double Grace: John Calvin’s view of the relationship of Justification and Sanctification”, *EA* 5 (1989), pp.99-105; For Calvin, ‘both justification and sanctification’ should be understood as ‘the chief *beneficia Christi*’ given to believers simultaneously and inseparably as a consequence of their ‘incorporation into Christ’. See Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.253-57; Philip Graham Ryken, “The Believer’s Union with Christ”, in *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine, & Doxology*, ed. Burk Parsons (Orlando, Florida: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008), pp.191-200; *Sermons on Ephesians*. 6:11-17, CO 51:828, ‘We are all justified in Christ, which is an excellent guide to help us walk in respectful fear of God and to speak with our fellow humans without causing them any problems...rather it helps us to strive to serve each other, since our Lord brought us together for this purpose and wants us to speak with our fellow humans in such a way that no one is self-centred or only interested in their own selfish good, but rather that we should look for the common good [*le profit commun*]’. [My translation.]

Christ, but also as the ongoing processes of both the mortification of the flesh and the vivification of the Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

In Calvin's discussion of the believer's self-denial in *Institutes* (1559), it is manifest that the common good of the church is the most decisive motivation of Christian self-denial. As he clearly attests:

If this is the one thing required – that we seek not what is our own – still we shall do no little violence to nature, which so inclines us to love of ourselves alone that it does not easily allow us to love of ourselves and our possessions in order to look after another's good, nay, to yield willingly what is ours by right and resign it to another...whatever benefits we obtain from the Lord have been entrusted to us on this condition: that they be applied to the common good of the church (*ut in commune Ecclesiae bonum, au bien commun de l'Eglise*).<sup>8</sup>

Calvin does not indicate directly that self-denial is a central idea within his theology of the common good; rather, he stresses that the lawful use of divine benefits for the common good must be the surest rule and most valid exhortation in realizing self-denial. In this way, Calvin presents his theology of the common good as the superlative regulation for self-denial in his doctrine of sanctification. To put it another way, for Calvin, believers' self-denial is of central importance in his doctrine of sanctification and therefore plays a vital role in his theology of Christian life for the common good.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, one could propose that, in Calvin's theology, the common good is the purpose of self-denial in Christians united with Christ. As he states:

for we are...being ingrafted into Christ's body ...whatever...any one of us has...it has been given him for the edification of his brethren in common [*in communem fratrum aedificationem*]; and let him...bring it forward, and not keep it back – buried...within himself, or make use of it as his own.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 3.3.5, pp.597-98; Haas, "Calvin's Ethics", in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.95.

<sup>8</sup> 3.7.5, p.695; CO 4:190, C.f. v.1541, pp.688-89, which shows his earlier short, but similar, ideas regarding this. See p.21 above.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. With regard to Christian formative self-denial for the common good, Zurich reformer Ulrich Zwingli wrote that 'the young man ought to exercise himself only in righteousness, fidelity and constancy: for with virtues such as these he may serve the Christian community, *the common good*, the state and individual...*the most like to God* are those who study to be of profit to all *even to their own hurt*'. See "Of the Education of Youth", in *Zwingli and Bullinger: Selected Translations*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), p.113.

<sup>10</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 12:27, p.412.

In his second edition of the *Institutes* (1539), Calvin defines the purpose of sanctification as the renewal of the image of God within believers as the children of God: ‘Therefore, in a word, I interpret repentance as regeneration, whose sole end is to restore in us the image of God that had been disfigured and all but obliterated through Adam’s transgression’.<sup>11</sup> What, then, is the relation between the restored image of God in Christ and the common good of the church as the body of Christ? Calvin appears to assume that the believer who has the restored image of God leads a life for the common good of the church; in addition, through their work towards the common good of the church, believers demonstrate to others their restored image of God in Christ.

As discussed above, Calvin’s thoughts on self-denial and the common good (especially of the church) are most clearly presented in his discussion on the Christian life, located in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in book III of *Institutes* (1559).<sup>12</sup> Here, Calvin’s theology of the common good focuses on the ethical command to use God’s gifts of grace according to the original divine intention and purpose. In relation to this, Edgar highlights that ‘Calvin goes on in 3.7.5 to remind us that any gift we have is for the sake of the church...he explains that every good gift we have is meant not for ourselves, but to be distributed for our neighbour’s good’.<sup>13</sup> He rightly implies that, based on Calvin’s unique idea of the common good for the church, one can also infer the notion of stewardship, which would become so central to later Reformed theology. Original Calvinism therefore recognizes that ‘the will of God is that society be an ordered “brotherhood” serving the common good’.<sup>14</sup> God’s intention and purpose is also the condition of His consignment of grace and gifts. The condition is the right use for the common good of the church or for the benefit of one’s neighbours, located ‘in his [the believer’s] eternal interests’.<sup>15</sup> Thus, to serve God always signifies serving God’s creatures.<sup>16</sup> Calvin asserts that the believer’s resources ought primarily to be employed as sacrifice for the benefit of one’s poor

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<sup>11</sup> *Inst.* 1539, Ch 5.8; CO 1:690C (I: 601). Quoted in Zachman’s translation, *Image and Word*, p.409.

<sup>12</sup> 3.7.5, p.695.

<sup>13</sup> William Edgar, “Chapter 14 Ethics: The Christian Life and Good Works according to Calvin”, in *Theological Guide to Calvin’s Institutes*, ed. David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback (New Jersey: PR Publishing, 2008), pp.326-27.

<sup>14</sup> Wolterstorff, *Justice and Peace*, pp.3-22.

<sup>15</sup> Calvin’s Letter to the French Church of Frankfurt, 3 March, 1556; CCCCXXX, John Calvin, *Tracts and Letters, Volume 6: Letters, Part 3 1554-1558*, ed. Jules Bonnet (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), pp.257-58.

<sup>16</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 16:3, p.218.

neighbours and the servants of Christ. He criticizes those selfish minds who squander their resources on every kind of luxury, such as fine foods, immodest attire, and magnificent dwellings.<sup>17</sup> If God's gift, given appropriately according to the diversity of one's calling in life, is realized in one's faithful service toward Christ, it is obvious that the restoration of the kingdom of Christ will be promoted.<sup>18</sup>

Given the above discussion, it is worth focusing attention on the fact that Calvin presents Christians' right use of God's gifts for the common good of the church as the surest rule or the most valid exhortation for believers. Thus, one may argue that the Christian life of self-denial in Calvin connotes a teleological ethical norm.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, in the remainder of this chapter, there will be a consideration of Calvin's presentation of the justification of self-denial, difficulties of praxis, and his thoughts on the common good as a purpose-driven rule for overcoming these difficulties.

First, it is important to demonstrate that, for Calvin, the theology of self-denial is a presupposition of sanctification for the theology of the common good. However, until now, little direct attention has been given to this subject from the perspective of the common good, with previous discussions focusing primarily on the social-ethical viewpoint.<sup>20</sup> This surely demands to be redressed, especially given the importance of self-denial within Calvin's thoughts on communal ethics. One ought therefore to examine how Calvin develops his theology of self-denial in the context of communal ethics, and how this contributes decisively to the foundation of a theology of the common good.

In the following sections, in order to investigate some essential features of the common good in Calvin's thoughts on self-denial, there will be an exploration as to how and why Christ's example, with its Trinitarian mode, is important for the believer's life of self-denial for the common good. There will then be a discussion about the presupposition of the believer's self-denial with regard to the common good, before the nature of Christian virtues intended for one's neighbours, such as humility and respect are examined. The particular focus of these sections will be the nature of Christian stewardship in terms

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<sup>17</sup> Comm. *Philippians*. 4:18, p.128.

<sup>18</sup> Haas, "Calvin's Ethics", p.96; 3.10.5-6; Comm. *1 Timothy*. 4:5; Comm. *Hebrews*. 8:5-6; Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 7:20.

<sup>19</sup> This will be discussed further in chapter 4, in relation to the use of the law and the common good.

of communal perspectives. Moreover, consideration will be given to the ways in which the believer's bearing of the cross can be used for the benefit of the common life, and in what way the present life, as a gift of God, can be rightly used for the public good.

### **3.2. Christ's example as a standard of self-denial for the common good in the believer and the Trinitarian mode as its theological foundation**

For Calvin, Christian sanctification, especially Christian self-denial, can be understood in terms of Trinitarian participation.<sup>21</sup> First, because God the Father 'revealed himself Father to us [the believers]', believers must prove their gratitude to God the Father by living their lives as children of God.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the believer's sanctification is presented as the language of gratitude.

Secondly, God the Son gives His image and likeness to the believer,<sup>23</sup> shown by the language of engrafting.<sup>24</sup> Calvin's imagery of engrafting is reminiscent of the fact that the duty of the believer to follow the example of Christ is not for the purpose of human merit but for the purpose of empowerment through participation in union with Christ. For Calvin, the believer's sanctification is played out through a life conforming to the example of Christ: 'Through whom we return into favour with God, [and] has been set before us as an example, whose pattern we ought to express in our life'.<sup>25</sup> In this way, Calvin does not locate the principle and standard of the Christian life of self-denial within the humane or philosophical norm, but rather within Jesus Christ, who gives the perfect image of God to the believer by the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the principle and standard of

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<sup>20</sup> See Wolterstorff, *Justice and Peace*, pp.3-22; Dommen & Bratt, ed. *John Calvin Rediscovered*, pp.3-75.

<sup>21</sup> According to Jean Cadier, the concept of self-denial should not be seen from a human-centred ethical perspective, but must be understood as a theological concept to deny human-centeredness. For Cadier, this can be understood as a kind of Copernican Revolution from the human-centred theology of the Roman Church to the Triune God-centred theology of the Reformed Church. See *The Man God Mastered: A Brief Biography of John Calvin*, trans. O.R. Johnston (London: InterVarsity Fellowship, 1960), pp.177-182.

<sup>22</sup> 3.6.3, p.687.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.686.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.687.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.686. According to Wallace, 'The whole process of our dying and rising with Christ is, for Calvin, repentance or sanctification...Sanctification is our whole participation in Christ' (*Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.94).

<sup>26</sup> See CO 9:813-815; quoted in Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.176.

Christian ethics taught by the Bible presents self-denial as the pattern of Christ.<sup>27</sup> Christ's life of self-denial is a guide to how the Christian life of self-denial is to be lived.<sup>28</sup> What then, according to Calvin, are the essential elements of the example of Christ, which the Christian, as His disciple and 'true imitator', should follow? These may include internal mortification, such as 'self-denial', and external mortification, such as 'voluntary bearing of the cross'.<sup>29</sup> As Wallace, Minnema, Leith, and Pattison note, Calvin's explanation of the inner 'mortification of the flesh' or 'the crucifixion of the old man' is equal to what he calls believer's self-denial, and 'the mortification of the outward man' is often regarded as the believer's endurance of the cross.<sup>30</sup>

According to Calvin, self-denial and endurance as examples of Christ are for all people; that is, every member of the body of Christ should follow the example of Christ.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Calvin recognizes 'Christ's ascension' as typifying the believer's life of self-denial, 'laying aside love of earthly things, wholeheartedly to aspire heavenward [Col 3:1 ff]'.<sup>32</sup> Christ's ascension is the outcome of Christ's self-denial. Thus, Christ's ascension becomes the motivation and shaper of Christian self-denial. For Calvin, the believer's restored image of God in Christ (including twofold mortification) by the work of the Holy Spirit becomes a new anthropological foundation, which underlies the believer's ability to follow Christ's example. Accordingly, the believer is able to participate specifically in the self-denial of Christ.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Calvin distinguishes and presents the inward mortification of the flesh and the outward mortification as the believer's double mortification corresponding to a twofold participation and fellowship in the death of

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<sup>27</sup> Wallace states that, for Calvin, 'self-denial is...the human accompaniment of a very real and powerful process of dying with Christ', and the death of Christ becomes 'a living force' for Christian self-denial. See *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp.63-64.

<sup>28</sup> 3.6.3, p.686; OS 4:148; Comm. *Philippians*. 2:9, pp.58-59; CO 52:27.

<sup>29</sup> Comm. *Matthew*. 16:24, p.303.

<sup>30</sup> Comm. *Philippians*. 3:10, p.99; CO 52:50; Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp.52-53; Minnema, "Calvin's Interpretation", pp.154-55; John Leith, *John Calvin's doctrine of the Christian life*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), p.76; Pattison, *Poverty*, pp.196-97.

<sup>31</sup> Comm. *Matthew*. 16:24.

<sup>32</sup> 3.6.3, p.687.

<sup>33</sup> For Calvin, twofold self-denial is composed of, first, the mortification of the understanding and will as the inward aspect (Comm. *Colossians*. 3:5; CO 52:119) and second, the loss of the blessings of the present life in bearing one's cross as the outward aspect. See Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.52.



Christ.<sup>34</sup> The inward mortification is identified with Christian self-denial as a daily struggle to follow Christ and the outward mortification is identified with the Christian endurance of the cross.

In addition to this notion of both inward and outward mortification, Haas summarizes that, in Calvin's ethics, there are two modes of Christian living for the common good which believers are called to by Christ's love of self-denial; these two modes are 'fairness' as mutual justice and 'the merciful service and sacrificial giving' for the needy.<sup>35</sup> By these two principles, Christ is recognized as the pattern of participation for the believer's activity.<sup>36</sup> Also, Christ is the sole goodness common to all believers in that He alone is the common author of 'grace' and 'gifts' from God.<sup>37</sup> Calvin sees a parallel between Jesus' life as 'the example of Christ' (*Christi exemplum*)<sup>38</sup> for believers in an objective sense and the Christian life for the common good in a subjective sense. A good example of this use of Christ as model for the common good of all can be found in Calvin's commentary on Luke, where he says that:

Christ, wherever he came, did not devote himself to his private concerns, or consult his own ease or comfort; but that the single object which he kept in view, to do good to others, and to discharge the office which had been committed to him by the Father.<sup>39</sup>

This emphasis is developed in his treatment of the nativity and passion narratives. In his handling of the story of the nativity, Calvin avers that Christ's self-abasement in denying himself a comfortable dwelling place is utilized to prepare all humans for comfortable spiritual residence in Christ.<sup>40</sup> As Pattison suggests, physical poverty as a visual pattern of Christ's self-denial is an important theme in Calvin's interpretation of the birth and passion narratives when it is focused upon the theology of the common good of the church and all humanity.<sup>41</sup> Namely, for Calvin, the Christ of the nativity takes

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<sup>34</sup> Comm. *Philippians*. 3:10, p.99; CO 52:50. Regarding this, Pattison manifests that self-denial, imitating Christ's life, is the attitude; 'mortification of the flesh', as participation in Christ's death, is the outcome (*Poverty*, p.199).

<sup>35</sup> Haas, *Equity*, p.114.

<sup>36</sup> 3.7.5, p.695.

<sup>37</sup> See Paul Elbert, "Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts", *JETS* 22.3 (1979), p.241; David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology*, (Leiden: Brill, 1966), p.82.

<sup>38</sup> *Inst.* 1536, 1.35, p.51.

<sup>39</sup> Comm. *Luke*. 10:38; CO 45:381.

<sup>40</sup> Comm. *Luke*. 2:7, p.112; CO 45:72-73.

<sup>41</sup> Comm. *2 Corinthians*. 8:9, pp.290-91; CO 50:98-99; Pattison, *Poverty*, pp.186-88.

humanity's common plight and their common bonds of sin, overcomes the common curse of sin, and provides salvation and all its concurrent benefits to the entire community.<sup>42</sup> What, then, does Calvin understand to be the anthropological co-foundation between Christ and humanity that accomplishes this? As Kennedy rightly summarizes, 'for Calvin, the flesh that Christ assumed establishes a commonality between him and all of humanity, for it is a flesh which he shares with all of humanity'.<sup>43</sup> Since Christ shares a common nature with humanity, Calvin argues that 'He [Christ] clothed Himself in our flesh and He [Christ] made Himself our brother'.<sup>44</sup> As Kennedy further states, 'it is the common nature that we share that makes possible our union with the Son of God'.<sup>45</sup> Calvin suggests that Christ plans to share all of Himself with believers by sharing the anthropological common ground with humanity: 'for our benefit that he who was to become our Redeemer was true God and true man'. In a similar vein, Calvin states:

His [Christ's] task was so to restore us to God's grace as to make of the children of men, children of God; of the heirs of Gehenna, heir of the Heavenly kingdom. Who could have done this had not the self-same Son of God become the Son of man, and had not he so taken what was ours as to impart what was his to us, and to make what was his by nature ours by grace?<sup>46</sup>

Here, it is important to recognize that, for Calvin, the provision of the union through the sharing of a common nature between Christ and humanity is a decisive stepping stone designed for enabling Christian participation in the model of Christ.<sup>47</sup>

Calvin also uses the passion narratives to clarify the significance of Christ's self-denial for the common good. In a discussion of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, he claims that 'his [Christ's] kingdom would be for the common benefit of the whole people, for he would introduce a happy state'.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, in his comments on an OT text which

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<sup>42</sup> Comm. *Luke*. 2:7, p.112; CO 45:72-73; *Luke* 2:16, p.123.

<sup>43</sup> Kevin D. Kennedy, *Union with Christ and the Extent of the Atonement in Calvin*, (New York: Peter Land Publishing, 2002), pp.81-82.

<sup>44</sup> Calvin, *Sermons on the Saving Work of Christ*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980), p.36.

<sup>45</sup> Kennedy, *Union with Christ*, p.86, which is based on Calvin, 2.12.3; OS 3:440. Biéler describes Christ as initiating the second Adam as a new humanity, not only in Himself but also in all people, and thus as the superior foundation of solidarity in a newly restored community, that is, the church, by denying and overcoming the estrangement of the humanity of the old Adam. See Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, pp.169-172.

<sup>46</sup> 2.12.2; OS 3:439.

<sup>47</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*. 8:9, p.290; CO 50:98.

<sup>48</sup> Comm. *Zechariah*. 9:9, pp.252, 255-57; CO 44:272-273.

prefigures this, Zechariah 9:9-10, Calvin recognizes Christ's ministry of poverty as working towards the common good of the majority; this suggests that, within Calvin's Christology, social welfare is an important part of the purpose of salvation.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, in his exegesis of Isaiah's Suffering Servant, Calvin regards Christ's self-denial as not a simple loss but a great gain and victory, since 'Christ's humiliation was the beginning of this supreme dominion' and 'the victory which he obtained for us'.<sup>50</sup> Here, Calvin asserts that, in the image of Christ as 'servant' in Isaiah, Christ is not regarded as a 'private individual' but as the subject who carries out a public 'office' as the supreme model of the 'restorer of all things'. Thus, 'whatever he affirms concerning himself we ought to understand as belonging also to us'.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, since believers are not simply members of the kingdom of Christ but rather in union with Christ, the character of Christ's incarnation and kingship extends commonly to all people under his rule in the kingdom of God. Calvin intends to interweave both Christ's work and the Christian life with a focus on self-denial for *solidarity* in the community. Calvin's notion of Christ as 'servant' may serve as the pattern for community-oriented church members and their outworkings in society.

This idea of the common nature<sup>52</sup> between Christ and Christians leads to Calvin's concept of the activated solidarity between God and humanity and also amongst humanity. This is discussed by Biéler in his examination of Calvin's Sermon on Deuteronomy. He focuses upon the theory of 'solidarity'<sup>53</sup> founded upon 'Jesus Christ's redeeming act' in order to explore its implications not only in the church 'as the part of society affected by this renewal' but also in relation to social and economic dimensions, in that 'the new life Christ has granted humanity is a social life'.<sup>54</sup> Biéler declares that, for Calvin, 'the new life is a fundamentally communal' one; moreover, 'the new life inaugurates (*sic*) for

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<sup>49</sup> Comm. *Zechariah*. 9:9-10. This raises important issues about Calvin's understanding of sanctification and its relation to church and state, which will be developed and illustrated in detail in the case study of Common Chest, the General Hospital, and the French Fund in Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>50</sup> Comm. *Isaiah*. 53:12, pp.131, 130, 129.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 52:13, p.107.

<sup>52</sup> This common nature must be differentiated from the common nature given to all people at creation, which is discussed in chapter 2, because this common nature between Christ and Christians relates to the restored image as opposed to the common nature of the surviving image.

<sup>53</sup> This 'solidarity' is a useful concept to explain a theological communal anthropology as the foundation of both ecclesial and social participation, which will be elucidated in Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>54</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.220, Refers to p.224 on Calvin's 96th *Sermon* on *Deuteronomy* 15:16-23; CO 27:350.

humanity is not even possible outside the common life'.<sup>55</sup> Thus, Calvin concludes that 'our [believers'] true completeness and perfection consist in our being united in the one body of Christ'.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, according to Calvin, in order to be appointed as Priest, King, and Prophet, and to fulfil His activity for the spiritual welfare of the divine community, Jesus Christ had to be anointed by the Spirit.<sup>57</sup> Calvin also uses the threefold office of Christ in order to provide the fruit and power of this office to Christians by the same work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup> First of all, for Calvin, the imputation of Christ's righteousness upon believers through wondrous exchange can be understood as the legal and substantial grounds for believers' activated participation as priests in the world, and as 'his [Jesus'] colleagues in the priesthood'.<sup>59</sup> In addition, for Calvin, Christ's anointing by the Holy Spirit for the office of prophet was not only *for* Christians but also *in* Christians since, in Calvin's mind, the continuing ministry of Christ is realized through the participation of Christians as Christ's companions in evangelical works.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, for Calvin, Christ strongly witnesses Himself as King through His Spirit, not only for Himself, but also for those who hunger and thirst, so that he may bestow His favour to them as 'the eternal protector and defender of his church'.<sup>61</sup> Accordingly, one may perceive how the three motifs defining Christ's office provide a paradigm for the common good through their exploration of the various relationships between Christ as figurehead and His church as follower. Therefore, one can conclude that, for Calvin, 'Christ himself putting himself forward as our pattern in order that we may follow his footsteps'<sup>62</sup> is the most powerful substance underlying the calling of God.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp.181, 220.

<sup>56</sup> Comm. *Ephesians*. 4:12, p.281.

<sup>57</sup> *Inst.* 1536, 2.14, pp.73-74.

<sup>58</sup> Jacques Courvoisier, *Les Catechismes de L'Eglise de Geneve 1541/1542*, BSHPF 85 (1935), section, pp.34-36.

<sup>59</sup> 3.11.10. See Courvoisier, section 43, pp.105-121; CO 6:1.

<sup>60</sup> See 2.15.2, p.496. According to Calvin, the pastor's preaching, as a prophetic message of love based upon truth, is recognized as an important function for the up-building and edification of the church and the common good therein.

<sup>61</sup> 2.15.3, pp.497-98; 2.15.5; Comm. *Psalms*. 28:9.

<sup>62</sup> *Inst.* 1536, 1.37, pp.53-54; cf. Comm. *1 Peter*. 2:21; Comm. *John*. 15:1-10; 13:15.

As has been examined, Christ expects Christians, as those truly ‘engrafted’<sup>63</sup> into the unity of the church, to participate in what He has done for them and in the common life He has prepared for them.<sup>64</sup> For Calvin, this is the identity of the true church. In what mode, then, can this example of Christ, anointed by the Spirit, as the original pattern of the life for the common good actually be delivered to Christians and realized in their common life?

In his exposition of self-denial through Trinitarian participation, Calvin explains that, as ‘the Holy Spirit dedicated us as temples to God, we must take care that God’s glory shine through us’.<sup>65</sup> As holy temples dedicated to God, believers receive the power and duty ‘to subdue and conquer the will of the flesh’ and thus cleanse themselves in their life of self-denial.<sup>66</sup> Thus, as Haas notes, Calvin appears to suggest that the ‘radical change from inordinate self-love to genuine love of neighbour is accomplished only by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in and through union with Christ by faith’.<sup>67</sup> Calvin stresses that since the Spirit-inspired believers are ‘no longer actuated’ by themselves, but are ruled by the action and prompting of the Spirit, ‘whatever good things are in us are the fruits of his [the Spirit’s] grace’.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, Calvin’s thoughts on Trinitarian participation are ‘the most auspicious foundations upon which to establish one’s [the believer’s] life’.<sup>69</sup>

Hence, one can propose that Calvin assumes that God, Christ and the Holy Spirit work communally towards the salvation of believers; in addition, believers’ communal participation in this Trinitarian work provides the most fundamental dynamic in their self-denial. Calvin also believes that the example (or pattern) of Christ, in the Trinitarian mode, extends concretely into believers’ lives of self-denial, bearing the cross, fairness, and their merciful service to the needy as they carry the restored image of God in Christ. Therefore,

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<sup>63</sup> 3.6.3, p.687.

<sup>64</sup> 4.1.2, p.1014.

<sup>65</sup> 3.6.3, p.687.

<sup>66</sup> Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.66.

<sup>67</sup> Haas, *Equity*, p.58. Julie Canlis understands Calvin’s idea of ‘a new en-Spirited human existence’ not as ‘the autonomous self’ nor ‘the dissolving of the self in God’ but as ‘the self-in-relationship’ within ‘the finding of the self in God’. Julie Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2010), p.247.

<sup>68</sup> 3.1.3, p.541.

one can suggest that, for Calvin, Christian self-denial is not rooted in individual ethics but in the communal ethics of solidarity.

### **3.3. Consecration: the presupposition of believers' self-denial for the common good**

Calvin's explanation of human participation in God's economic activity begins with the notions of 'consecration' and 'dedication'. When describing 'the law of the Lord' as 'the finest and best-disposed method of ordering man's life' in his discussion of Romans 12.1-2, he demonstrates that there exists 'an even more explicit plan to that rule', which is founded upon consecration and dedication.<sup>70</sup> For Calvin, only the believers dedicated to God are able to participate in the life of divine economy and to live for the glory of God; in his mind, such consecration or dedication is the new ontological presupposition that makes possible the life of self-denial. Calvin's conceptualization of theological ethics therefore appears to be composed of three steps: consecration, self-denial, and the life for the common good. That is, self-denial without consecration is neither possible nor desirable, for self-denial is 'holy sacrifices', which demand a full cost.<sup>71</sup> As he writes in a letter to William Farel:

When I remember that I am not my own, I offer up my heart, presented as a sacrifice to the Lord...And for myself, I protest that I have no other desire than that, setting aside all consideration of me, they may look only to what is most for the glory of God and the advantage of the Church...Therefore I submit my will and my affections, subdued and held-fast, to the obedience of God.<sup>72</sup>

Since God's grace and gifts are provided to dedicated believers (who have the restored image of God in Christ) for divine purpose such as the glory of God and for the common good of the church, Calvin believes that believers should pass through the tunnel of self-denial for their own realization. In other words, only consecrated believers can become mediators of the spiritual economy, able to use rightly God's deposit; that is, all the blessings granted from God. If the consecrated believer uses a spiritual deposit, or divine blessing, to achieve holiness, it will be profitable in God's economy for the believer's

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.; 3.6.3. p.687. This discussion regarding the pneumatological perspective of the Trinitarian mode will be further developed and illustrated in the later examination of the communal role of the gifts of the Spirit in section 2 of chapter 5.

<sup>70</sup> 3.7.1. p.689-690.

<sup>71</sup> 3.7.5. p.696.

<sup>72</sup> LXXIII – To Farel, Aug 1541, John Calvin, *Tracts and Letters, Volume 4: Letters, Part 3 1554-1558*, pp.280-81; CO 9:17-18.

eternal life. On the other hand, when God's blessings are spent for profane use and used only for the believer's physical desire, it will cause a loss to God's economy for the believer's eternal life.

Calvin describes the major theological anthropological premise of 'the even more explicit plan for the ordering of the human's life' with the following declaration: 'We are not our own masters, but belong to God'.<sup>73</sup> For Calvin, those who are their own masters lose the image of God, but those who take God as their master enjoy the restored image of God in Christ. Calvin sees this as an ontological presupposition of self-denial, the sum of Christian life, the life of the restored image of God in Christ, from which he draws the following ethical implication: 'We are not our own: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own: in so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours'.<sup>74</sup> For Calvin, the reason and purpose of self-denial in the believer is neither a simple ascetic thought to deny this present life nor is it the recognition of human merit. In other words, one could say that Calvin regards self-denial as the *raison d'être* of being human. Therefore, if believers only consult their 'self-interest',<sup>75</sup> living a life of self-centeredness, they cannot avoid denying the original *raison d'être* of life and thus, from an ontological perspective, follow an inevitable path towards catastrophic consequences. On the other hand, the life that pursues 'the neighbour's benefit', 'the common good', or 'the common advantage',<sup>76</sup> where God-centeredness replaces selfishness, is a life that follows the *raison d'être* of human life, in which believers can follow the path towards the building and completion of humanity's

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<sup>73</sup> 3.12.1-5. pp.754-59, Calvin also implies the divine perfection and the imperfection of humanity; he therefore advises that humans should give up 'all self-deception', 'flattery and being affected by blind self-love', and 'all pestilent self-indulgence', and instead, carry out self-examination, and regard it as the moral presupposition of self-denial.

<sup>74</sup> 3.7.1. p.690, Thus, Wallace argues that 'self-denial...implies that...we can continue to hold them [all our actual riches and possessions] only as we constantly deny them to ourselves and hold them for the Lord' (*Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 61). See also 3.7.8; Comm. *Luke*. 14:33, CO 45:296; According to Calvin, the believer must exchange his or her own bad things with 'his [Christ's] good things (*ipsius bonis queamus*)'. In other words, believers ought to remove their 'confidence' in themselves (*nostri fiducia*) and exchange it with 'the assurance of his [God's] goodness' (*sola bonitatis eius certitudine*). As is declared in Calvin's appeal to the Church Fathers, 'Augustine says, "forgetting our own merits [*nostra merita*], we embrace Christ's gifts [*Christi dona*]."...Bernard is in agreement with this [idea]...they [the proud] wrongfully retain the credit for grace that passes through them, as if a wall should say that it gave birth to a sunbeam that it received through a window', (3.12.8. p.762.)

<sup>75</sup> 3.7.1. p.690.

<sup>76</sup> 3.7.5. p.695.

ontological self-realization. Thus, for Calvin, the life of self-denial is not simply a life of self-emptying; rather, within believers, Christ lives and reigns by the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, for Calvin, believers belong to God before they belong to the community. Thus, he does not present the church community as the primary rationale underlying the believer's life of self-denial. Accordingly, he emphasizes the life of self-denial as being the most vital essence of Christian life, setting it forth in his ontological declaration on the divine origin of the human being, as the image of God, claiming that 'we are not our own masters, but belong to God'.<sup>78</sup> Thus, in Calvin's mind, the grounds of self-denial for the love of one's neighbours should be founded primarily upon the theological anthropological proposition that humanity belongs to God; this takes priority over any socio-anthropological rationale for self-denial, for example, that 'man is by nature a political [social] animal'.<sup>79</sup> The believer's consecration to God is the theological starting point of the personal ethics for the community.<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, the believer's life of self-denial produces the following mode of living: 'We seek not the things that are ours but those which are of the Lord's will and will serve to advance his glory'.<sup>81</sup> Thus, self-denial is the discipleship to which Christ commands believers.<sup>82</sup>

Calvin presents the spirituality of self-denial as the sole controlling force of all kinds of human desires, such as pride, arrogance, ostentation, avarice, desire, lasciviousness, effeminacy, self-love; these are the outcomes of the lost image of God, which become an obstacle to Christian love of neighbour.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the spirituality of self-denial -- to

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<sup>77</sup> 3.7.1. p.690.

<sup>78</sup> 3.7.1. p.689.

<sup>79</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKon (New York: Random House, 1941), Book I, Ch. 2, p.1129. Aristotle states that 'man is by nature a political animal. And therefore, men, even when they do not require one another's help, desire to live together; not but that they are also brought together by their common interests in proportion as they severally attain to any measure of well-being. This is certainly the chief end, both of individuals and of states'; in Aristotle, Book III. Ch.6, p.1184, cf. *Inst.* 2.2.13.

<sup>80</sup> Niesel argues that Christian self-renunciation means the threefold orientations toward God, Christ, and one's neighbour in the manner of finding 'its proper expression in love to the brethren' (*Calvin*, pp.144-45).

<sup>81</sup> 3.7.2. pp.690-91.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*; Comm. *John.* 13:35, p.77, 'Self-love keeps all our senses bound in such a manner that brotherly love is altogether banished'; CO 26:10, *sermons on Deuteronomy*, 2:1-7, 'Humanity has decided to do just the opposite of what God has ordered them to do - we are very far from a



obey the divine calling and to overcome human selfishness -- is decisive for living for the common good.

In his discussion of Titus 2, Calvin suggests that the ‘two obstacles that chiefly hinder’ the believer’s life of self-denial are ungodliness and worldly desires.<sup>84</sup> For Calvin, ‘ungodliness’ can be understood as ‘whatever contends against the earnest fear of God’; it compromises the presupposition that ‘we are God’s’. Likewise, Calvin understands ‘worldly desires’ as opposed to the presupposition that ‘we are not our own master’.<sup>85</sup> As a result, both obstacles interrupt the correct development of the believer’s life of self-denial for the common good of the church.

In particular, Calvin notes Paul’s proposal that all actions of Christian life are categorized by God into ‘soberness, righteousness, and godliness’, which could be considered the characteristics of the believer’s restored image of God in Christ. As he states:

Soberness doubtless denotes chastity and temperance as well as a pure and frugal use of temporal goods, and patience in poverty. Now righteousness embraces all the duties of equity in order that to each one be rendered what is his own [cf. Rom. 13:7]. There follows godliness, which joins us in true holiness with God when we separated from the iniquities of the world.<sup>86</sup>

It is important to note here that, for Calvin, ‘equity’, which includes the promotion of good for the profit of all people, is vital for the believer’s self-denial.<sup>87</sup> However, in the *Institutes* Calvin also assigns equal importance to ‘liberal and kindly sharing’ within this

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situation where neighbours feel that they have been brought together by God so that each person can serve another and so that they can strive for the common good [*qu’ils tendent au bien commun*], causing no harm to others’. [My translation.]

<sup>84</sup> 3.7.3. p.692.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> According to Hass, self-love induces indifference to the profit of the other, but self-denial produces concern for the other’s rights, which coincides with the request of equity. Hass believes that, for Calvin, self-denial forms equity and generosity; however, equity is not a simple justice and fairness, but includes the consideration of others through charity and self-sacrifice. In Comm. 2 *Corinthians*. 8:14, Calvin teaches that ‘in Col. 4.I, where he [Paul] exhorts masters to give to their servants what is equal. He certainly does not mean that they should be equal in condition and status, but rather the kindness and gentle forbearance that masters owe their servants. Thus the Lord commends to us this fair proportioning of our resources that we may, in so far as funds allow, help those in difficulties that they may not be some in affluence and others in want’, p.113, (CNTC).

life of self-denial, since God's grace and gifts should be used for the common good.<sup>88</sup> These could therefore operate as the two main principles which function as a check and balance to produce the best outcome for the common good. According to Calvin, believers' main virtues for the formation of the common good, namely equity and generosity, are the outcome of their dedication to God, since these virtues have directly and implicitly resulted from those good qualities mentioned above, that is, 'sobriety, righteousness, and godliness'.<sup>89</sup>

To summarize, Calvin posits that Christ lives and reigns by the work of the Holy Spirit only in dedicated believers; as a result, through self-denial, they are able to deny human nature, reason, and will, and instead live a life of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness. Calvin seems to suppose that this enables dedicated believers to pursue both 'equity' and 'liberal and kindly sharing' through their use of God's gift for the common good.

### **3.4. Christian self-denial for the benefit of neighbour: Humility and Respect**

Before examining the role and value of Christian virtues within common life, it is important first to clarify Calvin's notion of 'neighbour', for it is the neighbour who is the object of Christian humility and respect.

Within *Institutes* Book 3, Calvin devotes much space to the topic of self-denial as the sum of Christian life, illuminating the 'principle of self-denial in our relations with our fellowmen'.<sup>90</sup> This raises the question: does Calvin's concept of 'neighbour' refer primarily to fellow believers in the church, or, is he also including neighbours living in the world *outside* the church? Calvin's intention when he talks about the term 'neighbours' is important, because it gives insight into the ways in which his theology of self-denial contributes to the formation of his theology of the common good, including church and society.

According to Calvin, there are several spheres of neighbourly love. God's command to love one's neighbour means a command to love every other human being including

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<sup>88</sup> 3.7.5.

<sup>89</sup> 3.7.3. p.692.

<sup>90</sup> 3.7.4. p.693.

one's opponents, regardless of whether they are 'barbarian and Greek, worthy or unworthy, friend or enemy'.<sup>91</sup> For Calvin, the basic ground of this universal love of neighbour lies not in the emphasis of dignity in humanity itself but in the careful consideration of the image of God in humanity: 'all should be contemplated in God, not in themselves'.<sup>92</sup> Thus, appealing to Christ's teaching on the parable of the Samaritans, Calvin clearly states that 'the term "neighbour" includes even the most remote person [Luke 10:36]'; moreover, 'we are not expected to limit the precept of love to those in close relationships...we ought to embrace the whole human race without exception in a single feeling of love'.<sup>93</sup> Thus it appears that, for Calvin, love of neighbour, including 'the greatest stranger', infers universal love.<sup>94</sup>

However, Calvin also teaches that love shown towards believers is more important than love shown to unbelievers, although both are included in the universal love shown to all humanity: 'for though there is a common tie that binds all the children of Adam, there is a still more sacred union among the children of God'.<sup>95</sup> Here, Calvin seems to contradict his notion of 'a single feeling' of universal love with the notion of special concern between members of the church. He appears to recognize the necessity of showing special concern towards believers, regardless of their secular status in this present life, by using various terms such as esteem, preference, dear, inestimable honours; for, they alone receive the restored image of God in them through Christ.<sup>96</sup> Rather than making a clear-cut distinction between believer and unbeliever, Calvin seems to place different levels of importance on the close relationship between God's image and the command of love within both ecclesial and social dimensions.

Two points can be drawn out of this. First, one can say that although Calvin does not denigrate the value of love for unbelieving neighbours for the common good of humankind, he follows Paul's biblical teaching by placing added value on love for neighbours who *are* believers, thereby promoting the common good of the church, the

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<sup>91</sup> 2.8.55.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> 2.8.55. p.57. See also Comm. *Exodus* 22:21-24 and *Leviticus* 19:33

<sup>94</sup> Comm. *Luke*. 10:30, pp.61-62.

<sup>95</sup> Comm. *Matthew*. 25:40, p.181.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

body of Christ.<sup>97</sup> Secondly, it is also interesting to note that this universal love should be understood as multifaceted rather than uniform; for Calvin still admits ‘the common habit of mankind’, which expects humanity to differentiate their responsibilities towards each other based on ‘the ties of kinship, acquaintanceship, and neighbourhood’.<sup>98</sup>

As well as identifying neighbours and explaining why believers should love them, Calvin also defines the correct nature of this love. Loving one’s neighbours for one’s own private good, in return for some reward, is not genuine love; it cannot be regarded as genuine participation in the unselfish life for the common good of all people. For Calvin, one should give one’s love to all neighbours, even those who seem unworthy of love. As he argues:

Now we need to realise that when God uses the word “neighbour”, he does not only include our relatives and friends, from whom we hope to gain some profit or advantage for ourselves, or who deserve some kind of reward from us... We are all made in the image of God and bear his stamp; we share a common nature. These things ought to maintain a sense of unity and brotherhood amongst us. Of course, many render themselves unworthy of this honour... Such people, therefore, cut themselves off as much as they can from the rank and company of ‘neighbours’, but we must still observe God’s command here. However little men may deserve to be regarded as neighbours, yet by showing them love, we demonstrate that God has helped us to overcome all malice towards them. In this way, we can see that even our enemies, who do nothing but rebuke us, are still our neighbours according to the principle that God has established.<sup>99</sup>

Turning to the notion of the Christian virtues of humility and respect, as mentioned above, self-denial has two aspects; one in relation to God, the other in relation to one’s neighbour.<sup>100</sup> However, as all people have a predilection for ‘rushing into self-love’ and ‘being proud of oneself’ while despising others,<sup>101</sup> Calvin emphasizes that it is impossible to obey the divine command to live one’s life doing good towards one’s neighbours ‘unless our mind be previously emptied of its natural feeling’.<sup>102</sup> Thus, he describes pride

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<sup>97</sup> 3.7.6, p.696; OS 4:156; Comm. *1 Peter*. 4:8-10, pp.129-131.

<sup>98</sup> 2.8.55.

<sup>99</sup> *Sermons on Galatians*. pp.520-21.

<sup>100</sup> 3.7.4. p.693.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*; also *Sermon on Matthew*. 3:1-2, CO 46:491-2.

<sup>102</sup> 3.7.4. p.693, Calvin notes this point well in his *Sermon on Galatians*. 5:14-18, pp.512-522. Furthermore, he explains why Christians should love all people including those who do not appear to deserve love; as he states, the purpose of love lies in ‘God and the sense of the community that ought to exist amongst us [human beings]’. Richard also suggests that here, Calvin is saying that

as obstructing and delaying the believer's ability to live his or her life for the good of all neighbours. He suggests that the most powerful barriers to mutual cooperation and solidarity among all people for the common good are self-pride and misanthropy based on 'the principle of self-love', which 'leads us to despise and neglect others'.<sup>103</sup>

How, then, does human self-pride specifically hinder or destroy the building up of the commonwealth of all people? Calvin appears to suggest that self-pride (a consequence of the lost image of God after the Fall) involves the revilement of a number of talents, which are variously distributed for the common good of all people. As he states:

If others manifest the same endowments we admire in ourselves, or even superior ones, we spitefully belittle...these gifts in order to avoid yielding place to such person...Hence arises such insolence that each one of us, as if exempt from the common lot, wishes to tower above the rest, and loftily and savagely abuses every mortal man, or at least looks down upon him as an inferior...For claiming as his own what pleases him, he censures the character and morals of others...[This is a] most deadly pestilence of love of strife and love of self...<sup>104</sup>

In other words, people ignore the fact that they are God's own possessions and that they are called to live a life for the benefit of their neighbours. Using the figurative language of 'pestilence', Calvin notes that the disease of self-pride does not lead one upward, in a positive direction, to cooperation and mutual respect of the diverse gifts given for the commonwealth. Rather, self-pride leads one downward, in a negative direction, to disputes and mutual loathing. Thus, for Calvin, human pride is the deadly virus which infects and destroys human solidarity.

How, then, can the pestilence of human self-pride be eradicated? According to Calvin, believers must acknowledge that all their gifts are from God, not from themselves, and that these gifts are enjoyed only by participation in these gifts in Christ by the Spirit: 'We are instructed to remember that those talents which God has bestowed upon us are not our

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only those who practice self-denial are able to love God and one's neighbours. See Lucien Joseph Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin*, (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1974), p.124.

<sup>103</sup> See Comm. *Galatians*. 5:14, CO 50:251-2; Comm. *Psalms*. 4:5, CO 31:62. Wallace notes that, for Calvin, 'there is an exceedingly close connexion between love for our fellow man and self-denial' (see 3.7.4.); he therefore draws the conclusion that, to Calvin's mind, 'one of the best ways in which to practice such inward self-denial...is to force ourselves to perform the duties of charity' (see 3.7.7.). See *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp.61-62.

<sup>104</sup> 3.7.4. pp.693-94.

own goods but the free gifts of God; and any persons who become proud of them show their ungratefulness'.<sup>105</sup>

One could argue therefore that, for Calvin, human self-pride, as the main characteristic of the loss of God's image after the Fall, is contrary to the commonwealth, whilst humility arising from human self-denial, as the main characteristic of the restored image of God in Christ, contributes to the commonwealth.<sup>106</sup> Calvin believes that when human beings pursue self-pride and despise the God-given talents of others, it is impossible to attain the common good of all people. For Calvin, this is only achievable by the liberal and kindly sharing of spiritual resources (for eternal life) and material resources (for this present life), through believers' humility and respect for others.

Calvin makes further points to develop this: believers cannot contribute to the common good when their gratitude for the God-given gifts and their respect for others' gifts from God are insufficient, even though both are characteristics of God's image.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, there is no contribution to the common good when the believer cannot properly practice the correct exchange of each gift in a spirit of mercy and kindness. For Calvin, the humility of the Christian functions as a positive resource, almost as a kind of 'money' in God's economy. However, because human pride compromises God's economy by being a form of 'bad money', it causes a 'loss'. Christian humility can activate all people's talents or gifts and maximize the common good of all people, but human pride, by mutual negation, totally neutralizes all talents and renders them powerless, so that the path to the common good becomes completely blocked.<sup>108</sup> Thus, for Calvin, this path can be restored properly and rightly only through self-humility and a respect for others' talents.

It will be helpful now to consider briefly Calvin's notion of divine goodness as a genuine foundation of the Christian common life. In Calvin's mind, the believer should not move towards the wrong destination, as in the case of self-flattery, but rather progress towards a life of self-denial, 'continuous in goodness until we attain to goodness itself'.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> 3.7.4. p.694.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Comm. *Ezekiel*. 16:15, 'The gifts which we receive from God's hand ought to be invitations to gratitude', quoted in *Calvin's Wisdom*, ed. Graham Miller (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), p.135.

<sup>108</sup> 3.7.4. pp.693-94.

<sup>109</sup> 3.6.5. pp.688-89.

Believers should, however, be wary of falling into the trap of ‘fake’ goodness through self-pride.<sup>110</sup> Thus, for Calvin, the Christian life does not depend upon *human* goodness, but is wholly dependent upon attaining the goodness of God, the ultimate goodness itself, which far surpasses its human counterpart.<sup>111</sup> Only when believers give up their own goodness and pursue instead the goodness of God can they contribute to the accumulation of the common good. Nevertheless, the believer’s self-denial must not be regarded in an ascetic, mystical, or negative sense. Rather, Calvin’s notion of self-denial is of a positive and formative spirituality,<sup>112</sup> which tends towards the realization of the common good of all people through *bona opera*, carried out mutually among believers who aim towards the ultimate goodness of God through the goodness of God in them. Thus, according to Partee, ‘Calvin considers self-denial a great gain, not a serious loss’.<sup>113</sup> One can therefore suggest that the believer’s personal or individual self-denial includes in itself both ecclesial and social ethics with a mutual and organic solidarity. Accordingly, as Leith notes, Calvin believed that ‘self-denial is more than a negative concept’.<sup>114</sup> For Calvin, the believer’s self-denial includes not only ‘mortification’ but also ‘vivification’. Thus, it is manifest that Calvin viewed vivification as being fundamentally involved in communal ethics. In other words, the believer’s self-denial can be regarded as the most fundamental dynamic in building the common good of the church since, in the believer’s life of self-denial, ‘on the one side, there is the death of self-centeredness. On the other, there is the positive love of neighbour and full commitment of self to God’.<sup>115</sup>

Thus, for Calvin, believers’ love of their neighbours and their living for the common good of the church are evidence of their self-denial. To love one’s neighbours means not

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<sup>110</sup> 3.7.4. p.693.

<sup>111</sup> 3.6.5. p.689.

<sup>112</sup> Regarding this, Wolterstorff maintains that ‘the dominant character of original Calvinism’ is that believers ‘desire to become an instrument of God’. In addition, he proposes that ‘the emergence of original Calvinism represented a fundamental alteration in Christian sensibility, from the vision and practice of turning away from the social world in order to seek closer union with God to the vision and practice of working to reform the social world in obedience to God’ (*Justice and Peace*, pp.6, 10, 11). In light of this, Busch stresses that ‘the self-denial...does not mean either a virtue that is valuable in itself or a lack of any sense for joy in life, but the active, helpful countermovement against the “self-seeking” of the rich...a sharing of the goods of the rich with the poor in the hope that this will build a society of solidarity...in a mutual giving and receiving’: Busch, “Reception of Calvin’s Social and Economic Thought”, p.75.

<sup>113</sup> Partee, *Calvin*, p.217.

<sup>114</sup> Leith, *The Christian Life*, p.77.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

to be selfish, and not being selfish is to participate in the life for the common good of the whole people.<sup>116</sup>

### 3.5. Christian self-denial for the common good: the spirituality of stewardship

For Calvin, the grace and gift of God is like a double-edged sword. Namely, if God's gift of grace is not used for its correct purpose, but is wrongly used for private benefit, this may contribute to the demolition of the whole community, and as a result, cause significant damage to the economy of God. However, if God's gift of grace is used for the public good of one's neighbour, according to its original purpose, this can instead contribute to the development of the whole community, and thus, becomes of significant benefit to the economy of God.<sup>117</sup> Accordingly, for Calvin, the decisive element for the common good is dependent upon believers' spirituality of self-denial and cooperation, that is, their correct use of the gift of God, rather than their simply having the gift of grace.<sup>118</sup>

In addition, for Calvin, the community is essentially the ontological basis of the individual. He demonstrates this using Paul's unique language of the 'human body' in 1 Corinthians 12, where it is used as an analogy for the church, the community of the saints united in Christ.<sup>119</sup> In his *Institutes*, 3.7.5, Calvin also presents the organic body of humanity as the best imagery to explain the essential character of the common good within the community. Each member's pursuit of their own private good has catastrophic effects, not only to the whole body but also to all members within the body. Namely, Calvin's Christ-centred anthropology takes an ontological form in which each believer enjoys the benefits only when they all pursue 'the common advantage of the whole body (*communio corporis totius commoditate procedit*)' or 'the common up-building of the church' (*ut ad commune Ecclesiae aedificationem*),<sup>120</sup> as they all have the restored image of God and are

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<sup>116</sup> *Sermon on Galatians*. pp.519-522.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Calvin recognizes both the believer's faith as a divine gift and the subsequent self-denial as the necessary condition for the realization of the commonwealth. See *Comm. Psalms*. 36:9. According to Calvin, 'the use of earthly blessings is connected with the pure feelings of faith, in the exercise of which we can alone enjoy them rightly and lawfully to our own welfare' (CO 31:363), quoted in Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.135.

<sup>119</sup> This analogy will be delineated in more detail in the section on the communal role of the spiritual gifts in chapter 5.

<sup>120</sup> 3.7.5. p.695.



living in communal solidarity.<sup>121</sup> In his usage of Paul's biological language of the human body, Calvin expounds his ontological reasoning for the need to share with others all the gifts of grace given by God for the common good of the community.

With the above discussion in mind, one is then led to Calvin's thoughts on stewardship as a 'rule for generosity and beneficence'.<sup>122</sup> He suggests that stewardship (*oeconomus rector*) could be defined as spiritual labour, working for God's economy to manage and render an account of 'everything God has conferred on us by which we are able to help our neighbour'.<sup>123</sup> What, then, is the distinctive standard of righteous stewardship? Calvin asserts that the sole qualification of righteous stewardship can be 'tested by the rule of love', a decisive ethic.<sup>124</sup> In light of this, one can clearly see that stewardship occupies a central position in Calvin's theology of the common good.<sup>125</sup>

However, it is unlikely that Calvin's spirituality of stewardship is a kind of asceticism, which ultimately pursues self-renunciation from an individual religious or moral perspective. Rather, Calvin's notion of stewardship is a step towards mutual reciprocity, in which the individual efforts of believers for the benefit of others bear, in turn, the fruit of their own rewards: 'Thus it will come about that we shall not only join zeal for another's benefit with care for our own advantage, but shall subordinate the latter to the former'.<sup>126</sup> In this manner, although Calvin's idea of the common good does not exclude the benefit to individuals, it ultimately focuses upon the communal benefit. This seems to correlate with the argument that Calvin's self-denial is not based upon simple avertive ethics but upon

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<sup>121</sup> CO 26:70-71, *Sermons on Deuteronomy* 3:12-22: 'we should remember...when God put us together into one body...all work together for the common good [*au profit commun*]...Humans try to take this partnership and twist it into the complete opposite of what it should be, with nobody thinking of the common good [*que nul ne pense au bien commun*]...It is not just that the church is similar to the human body, but there is the fact that the Son of God is our head, and we are of Him and we are blessed with grace and talent to the extent which He has seen fit to give us...when he [someone] recognises that he needs the help and support of others, should he then draw away from his friends?...[in that case] he is unable to do any work and is bothered at having to work for the common good [*de travailler pour le bien commun*]'. [My translation.]

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> As Wolterstorff correctly notes, 'The Calvinist saw his occupation as something through which to exercise his obedience...each occupational role must either be made to serve the common good, or if in some case that cannot be done, then that role must be discarded'. However, his analysis here is based less upon Calvin's own text than upon Calvinist social ethics within a historical context (*Justice and Peace*, p.16).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

formative ethics for the mutual advantage of all believers, as is shown in the discussion of the consecration in the previous section.<sup>127</sup>

Thus, Calvin introduces ‘a sincere feeling of love’ as being the most important element for the believer’s stewardship for the common good.<sup>128</sup> The work of love, which genuinely contributes to the common good of the church, must consist of internal, rather than external, fulfilment:

Of Christians something even more is required than to show a cheerful countenance and to render their duties pleasing with friendly words. First, they must put themselves in the place of him whom they see in need of their assistance, and pity his ill fortune as if they themselves experienced and bore it, so that they may be impelled by a feeling of mercy and humaneness to go to his aid just as to their own.<sup>129</sup>

Accordingly, one can see that if material gifts are distributed to one’s neighbours, at the expense of spiritual gifts such as humility and love, then such gifts are unable to contribute genuinely to the common good of the whole body.<sup>130</sup> This explains why Calvin argues that ‘each man will so consider with himself that in all his greatness he is a debtor to his neighbours’.<sup>131</sup> The reason why nobody should despise their neighbour or pride themselves on their own possessions lies in the presupposition that all are debtors, aided, visibly or invisibly, by their neighbours. Accordingly, nobody can be completely exempt from the benefits resulting from communal activities carried out for the common good of all people. Furthermore, everyone participates in their activity for the common good while they receive the benefits from all people’s activity for the common good. In Calvin’s mind, believers owe to God *and* to their neighbours; namely, they are two-fold debtors. Accordingly, material gifts given to a neighbour in a spirit of pride, insolence, or contemptuousness, do not profit either recipient or giver; rather, they become a source of shameful depravity.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Section 3.1. above.

<sup>128</sup> 3.7.7, p.697; Comm. *Psalms*. 16:3, pp.218-19. As Calvin states in his Commentary on Matthew, ‘The King answering will say to them, Verily I tell you, So far as you did it to one of these my brethren, you did it to me’ (Comm. *Matthew*. 25:40, p.174).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., pp.697-98.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p.698.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p.697. Here, Calvin mentions ‘some who wish to seem very liberal and yet bestow nothing that they do not make reprehensible with a proud countenance or even insolent words...most men give their alms contemptuously’.

Finally, therefore, one should propose that the believer's spirituality of 'self-denial toward God'<sup>133</sup> is founded upon Calvin's belief that divine gifts are to be circulated according to the divine economic order.<sup>134</sup> Calvin reminds his readers that 'Scripture calls us to resign ourselves and all our possessions to the Lord's will, and to yield to him the desires of our hearts to be tamed and subjugated'.<sup>135</sup>

With the above discussion in mind, one can suggest that Calvin's thoughts on the common good do not put ultimate value on the present life,<sup>136</sup> which pursues the physical abundance of worldly and material possessions. He does not exclude the physical value of this present life, but recognizes that it is not the essential value. For Calvin, the common good of this present life needs to be seen from the perspective of eternal life, and founded upon the spiritual values of eternal life, namely, the believer's receipt of 'the Lord's blessing' and the subsequent Christian happiness in sharing God's gifts with one's neighbours.<sup>137</sup>

Thus the believer's self-denial runs counter to the counterfeit happiness of this present secular life, and seeks true happiness in eternal life. Calvin maintains that self-denial before God leads the believer to a life of accepting both good and evil from God's hands with calm self-confidence and the promise of eternal victory. As he teaches, 'we [the believers] shall not dash out to seize upon riches and usurp honours through wickedness and by stratagems and evil arts, or greed, to the injury of our neighbours'.<sup>138</sup> Such behaviour ought to be regarded as opposed to the common good of the whole community. Believers must commit themselves to God's providential care, not only for this present life but for eternal life to come.<sup>139</sup> Accordingly, the economy of the bad does

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<sup>133</sup> 3.7.1-2.

<sup>134</sup> 3.7.5, p.695.

<sup>135</sup> 3.7.7, p.698.

<sup>136</sup> In contrast, Calvin's positive idea on the present life as a divine gift for the common good will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>137</sup> 3.7.8. p.699. Quistorp stresses that, for Calvin, though the eternal blessedness is the same to all believers in Christ, the degree of heavenly glory will be correspondingly different according to the diversity of gifts of the Spirit which they already receive in this present life. This idea leads to Calvin's implication that it is the right and various uses of the gifts of grace for the common good of church and humankind that form a consistent and decisive standard for the various bestowals of the heavenly special reward to each individual. See Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, p.176.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 31:5, pp.501-4.

not contribute to the common good of God's kingdom and does not provide humanity with any benefits. Only the economy of the good can contribute to the common good of God's kingdom, and ultimately benefits humanity 'even through all hindrances, to bring all things to a happy and favourable outcome'. Consequently, the secular success and physical abundance of 'impious men amassing great honours and riches' is certainly not relevant to the formation of the common good; therefore, this cannot be the destination of the Christian life, and must not be the object of any believer's envy.<sup>140</sup>

Finally, one can conclude that, for Calvin, the believer's spirituality of stewardship takes a central place in his or her life of self-denial for the common good of the church. Here, Calvin's understanding of the communal spirituality based upon stewardship results from his suggestion that all gifts are from God and primordially belong to God; as a result, they fulfil His purpose only when they are used rightly for the love of neighbour.

### **3.6. Bearing the Cross: the believer's exercise of self-denial in suffering for the common good**

For Calvin, the believer's life for the common good of the church is realized only by self-denial. This self-denial is not a freely given gift (like justification),<sup>141</sup> but rather is achieved by the believer bearing the cross to follow the model of Christ. Calvin differentiates suffering in general, or the plight common to all people in the world, from the persecution due to Christian commitment occurring in all believers who follow the image of Christ.<sup>142</sup> Bearing the cross is an essential training through which all children of

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<sup>140</sup> 3.7.8. p.699.

<sup>141</sup> This does not mean that Calvin's self-denial, as the most significant component of sanctification, is not connected with justification. In a similar vein, in Luther's theology of gifts of grace, justification starts from a unilateral relation and functions as form of renewal opening the way toward a reciprocal relation. For Luther, pure gift should be recognized as a dynamic power to make possible the foundational renovation of the divine-human relationship and social interaction, not a closed storehouse burdened by the debts of God's gift. Justification is the starting point where the economy of grace can run beyond the strict definition of free gift. See Bo Holm, "Luther's Theology of the Gift", in *The Gift of Grace: The Future of Lutheran Theology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), pp.79-82.

<sup>142</sup> Comm. *Matthew*. 16:24, p.304. According to Calvin, 'He lays down this injunction, because, though there are miseries common to all which the life of men is indiscriminately subjected, yet as God trains His people in a peculiar manner, in order that they may be conformed to the image of His Son, we need not wonder that this rule is strictly addressed to them' (CO 45:481-82). See also Comm. 2 *Corinthians* 1:5, p.112; CO 50:11.

God receive the image of Christ in order to live a sanctified life for the common good of the church.<sup>143</sup>

Why, then, is the bearing of the cross unavoidable for believers? With regard to this, Calvin appears to suggest that esteeming ‘our virtue above its due measure’<sup>144</sup> is the most dangerous obstruction to the formation of the common good of the church since it lifts believers up into a ‘stupid and empty confidence in the flesh’.<sup>145</sup>

According to Calvin, human goodness constitutes a form of meritorious work, and as a result, it may contribute to the common good of the Roman Church, acting as the treasury ‘for redemption, for reconciliation, or for satisfaction of the church’.<sup>146</sup> However, he also seems to suggest that this idea could actually compromise the building and advancement of the church in terms of the teleological perspective of believers’ activity participating in Christ’s work for their neighbours.<sup>147</sup> Therefore, for Calvin, the saints’ acts of bearing the cross, outplayed in their martyrdom, should not be understood from the perspective of ascetic ethics or the doctrine of merit in the Catholic Church. From this Catholic perspective, the blood of martyrs (*sanguis Martyrum*) regarded as human meritorious work, which is conferred on the formation of the common good [the shared heritage] of the church (*commune Ecclesiae bonum, bien commun de l’Eglise*) as the treasury of the church (*thesaurum ecclesiae*), could be distributed to believers by the Church for their salvation.<sup>148</sup> Rather, according to Calvin, one should recognize the common good of the church (*commune Ecclesiae bonum*) as the outcome of the believer pursuing a life of self-denial in the pattern of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Calvin states that Christian suffering, that is the ‘exercise of the cross’, is not ‘the suffering of a few individuals, but the common persecutions of the Church (*communes ecclesiae persecutiones*)’. See Comm. *Hebrews*. 11:35-37; CO 55:168-9. In this way, the believer’s self-denial can be regarded as the identification of participation in the common good of the whole church. See also Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 69; 3.8.8; Comm. *Philippians*. 1:28, CO 52:21; Comm. *Matthew*. 24:9, CO. 45:653.

<sup>144</sup> 3.8.2, p.703.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> 3.5.2-3.

<sup>147</sup> 3.5.4.

<sup>148</sup> 3.5.3. p.673; OS 4:135; CO 4:164.

<sup>149</sup> 3.7.5.

Furthermore, according to Calvin, for the proper use of the divine gifts of grace to be realized, Christian endurance and obedience is paramount. In order to achieve these, the exercise of bearing the cross is required.<sup>150</sup> As Calvin instructs:

The Lord also has another purpose for afflicting his people: to test their patience and to instruct them to obedience...it so pleases him...to make manifest and clear the graces which he has conferred upon the saints, that these may not lie idle, hidden within. Therefore, by bringing into the open the power and constancy to forbear, with which he has endowed his servants, he is said to test their patience.<sup>151</sup>

‘The most excellent gift of patience’: for Calvin, this is the gift that enables a number of other divine gifts given for the common good to be used correctly. Without adversity, the believer will have no endurance and obedience, and without endurance and obedience, the divine gifts will be kept unused in dead storage, but through the affliction of believers, ‘they may not be hidden in obscurity’ and will not ‘lie useless and pass away’.<sup>152</sup> Thus, the cross in the lives of believers is like a ‘medicine’ given to the sick for their spiritual health, enabling them to live within the virtuous cycle of God’s economy, and subjecting and restraining their flesh with the remedy of the cross.<sup>153</sup> In other words, the believer takes this ‘medicine’ and becomes spiritually healthy, thereby making good use of God’s gifts and, consequently, improving the life of the whole community.

How, then, does Calvin understand the persecution happening to believers who try to protect ‘the good and the innocent against the wrongs of the wicked’?<sup>154</sup> How does he make sense of ‘the offenses and hatred of the world, which may imperil either our life, our fortunes, or our honour’ and which believers living for the common good of all people, especially the poor, may endure? For Calvin, the believer’s experience of worldly persecution may cause undue damage in terms of this present life and its material

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<sup>150</sup> Wallace states, ‘The experience of affliction under the Cross enables us to mortify the flesh and destroys self-confidence and self-love’ (*Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.75).

<sup>151</sup> 3.8.4. pp.704-5.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p.705.

<sup>153</sup> 3.8.5. p.705-706; Comm. *Genesis*. 3:19, ‘for God does not consider, in chastening the faithful, what they deserve; but what will be useful to them in future; and fulfils the office of a physician rather of judge’, quoted in *Calvin’s Wisdom*, p.3. Ellen Charry stresses that ‘Calvin highly values psychological suffering to motivate spiritual renewal’ by focusing on the importance of suffering in the discussion of happiness in Calvin’s writings: Ellen Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), pp.116-17.

<sup>154</sup> 3.8.7. p.707.

economy.<sup>155</sup> For Calvin, the ultimate point of the theology of the common good is spiritual well-being for eternal life. Accordingly, even though the lives of believers may be marked by poverty and affliction in this life, it does not mean that their suffering and affliction has no bearing upon the heavenly economy in the kingdom of God. Rather, the common good of the church, namely, the spiritual property of the kingdom of God, further increases through the believers' 'suffering for righteousness' sake'.<sup>156</sup> This follows the same of Christ, who suffered on the cross for the profit of the church. As Calvin asserts; 'If, being innocent and of good conscience, we are stripped of our possession by the wickedness of impious folk, we are indeed reduced to penury among men. But in God's presence in heaven our true riches are thus increased'.<sup>157</sup>

Thus Calvin asserts that the cross of suffering and affliction given to the believer is transformed into the 'happiness' of 'our salvation and good'.<sup>158</sup> Believers have a reason for gratitude even in suffering, not only because God gives 'righteousness and equity' in their adversity, but also because the suffering of believers contributes paradoxically and positively to 'our salvation and good' (*saluti ac bono*).<sup>159</sup>

Thus one can say that for Calvin, the theology of suffering leads to the theology of gratitude since it contributes to believers' salvation and good. Calvin makes this point clearly:

Now, because that only is pleasing to us which we recognize to be for our salvation and good, our most merciful Father consoles us also in this respect when he asserts that in the very act of afflicting us with the cross he is providing for our salvation [*saluti nostrae consulere*]. But if it be clear that our afflictions are for our benefit,

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid. According to Eric Fuchs, 'a peaceful acceptance of the difficulties that life presents is made possible by the assurance of the expected riches in the future life. This should not lead us to hate our present life but to discern within it the signs of God's goodness' ("Calvin's ethics", p.152). See also 3.9.3.

<sup>156</sup> 3.8.7. p.707; *Sermons on Micah*, 17th, 4:10b-13, p.252, 'what is his plan [in all our afflictions]? It is that God, cognizant of what we can endure, does not permit us to be tempted beyond our limit. Furthermore, that our present afflictions are for our own good'.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. See also Comm. *John*. 12:24, p.28; CO 47:288.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 3.8.11. p.711; OS 4:170.

<sup>159</sup> 3.8.11. p.711; CO 33:169, *Sermons on the book of Job*, Ch 3, 'Afterwards he says (St. Paul, Philippians 1:22-23), although it would be better for me to depart soon, I am happy to stay here. This is how St. Paul encourages all the faithful to submit to the will of God to such an extent that they not only endure their troubles patiently, but they are also ready to suffer for their brothers, in order for their work to be of some use to the common good and that they might serve the Church of God [*mais qu'ils soyent aussi prests de souffrir pour leurs prochains, en sorte que leur labeur soit utile pour le bien commun, et qu'ils servent a l'Eglise de Dieu*]' . [My translation.]

why should we not undergo them with a thankful and quiet mind [*grato placidoque animo*]? Therefore, in patiently suffering these tribulations, we do not yield to necessity but we consent for our own good [*bono nostro acquiescimus*].<sup>160</sup>

Gratitude takes a vital place in Calvin's doctrine of Christian life; this is founded on the idea that the suffering in believers' lives can be interpreted from the perspective of divine activity in order to realize and accomplish not only their individual wellbeing and salvation but also the common good of their whole community. In this way, Calvin describes the communal benefits of martyrdom as a 'grateful' and 'sweet smelling' sacrifice, which, when 'diffused' amongst the wider population, leads to the 'salvation of many'.<sup>161</sup> Therefore, through the self-denial of believers in their adversity, the spiritual common good of the church is also built and accomplished.

Without the believer's suffering in the present life, namely, the exercise of the cross, 'the whole soul, enmeshed in the allurements of the flesh, seeks its happiness on earth.'<sup>162</sup> However, for Calvin, the believer's happiness on earth is not recognized as a synonym of the common good of the church. Rather, when believers realize the 'vanity' of happiness in this present life, they also see their 'too great eagerness after fleeting and transient riches, or repose in those which they possess' and they rightly understand 'how unstable and fleeting are all the goods that are subject to mortality'.<sup>163</sup> Accordingly, for Calvin, the exercise of bearing the cross is vital for the believer's growth in faith through their realization of the spiritual significance of this present life's troubles.<sup>164</sup> For Calvin, the believer's share in Christ's way of the cross directs the eye of faith from temporal and selfish happiness on earth to eternal and shared happiness in heaven. The highest goodness, 'the ultimate goal of good things',<sup>165</sup> does not belong to the individual's prosperity on earth but to the commonwealth for eternal life.

To summarize, divine grace in fellowship with Christ can be provided to believers by their leading a Christ-like life of self-denial in their suffering and affliction, where 'believers must bear the cross in order to follow their Master; that is, in order to conform

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<sup>160</sup> 3.8.11. p.711-2; OS 4:170.

<sup>161</sup> Calvin, Letter to Godfrey Varagila, 17<sup>th</sup> December, 1557 in Calvin, *Tracts and Letters, Volume 7: Letters, Part 4 1559-1564*, pp.427-28.

<sup>162</sup> 3.9.1. p.712.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p.713.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> 3.9.2. p.714.



to His example, and to abide by His footsteps like faithful companions'.<sup>166</sup> In addition, because they are in union with Christ, living their life of self-denial and conforming to the pattern of Christ, believers can share God's grace, favour, and gifts with their neighbours for the common good of the church. As Wallace notes, this life implies 'the value of a sacrament'.<sup>167</sup>

### 3.7. This present life and its right use as a Divine gift for the common good

What, then, is the value and purpose of this present life? For Calvin, it may be humanity's 'testimony of divine benevolence'; the present life 'serves us in understanding God's goodness'. As he further states:

Let believers accustom [*assuefaciant*] themselves to a contempt of the present life that engenders no hatred of it or ingratitude against God. Indeed, this life, however crammed with infinite miseries [*infinitis miseriis*] it may be, is still rightly to be counted among those blessings of God which are not to be spurned...For believers especially, this [the present life] ought to be a testimony of divine benevolence [*divinae benevolentiae*], wholly destined, as it is, to promote their salvation [*ad salutem eorum promovendam*].<sup>168</sup>

Thus life needs to be understood from the perspective of the gifts of divine grace, which are given for the common good of the church or the good of neighbours. In relation to this, Wallace suggests that when Calvin talks about the gifts given for 'the good of our neighbours', this 'good' may include both a spiritual and social dimension, which are embodied not only by sharing of 'the spiritual gifts we have from Christ through the Spirit for the benefit of the Church' but also by sharing 'the possessions, wealth and natural abilities we have as privileged citizens for the benefit of the social community'.<sup>169</sup> Thus for Calvin, though the physical benefits gained through the sharing of materials are important, the spiritual benefits gained from pursuing 'the promotion of the salvation' for eternal life, are more decisive and are contained inseparably within the sharing of materials in this present life.<sup>170</sup> Calvin argues that one can learn sufficiently about the right

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<sup>166</sup> Comm. *Matthew*. 10:38, p.472; CO 45:294.

<sup>167</sup> Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.70.

<sup>168</sup> 3.9.3. pp.714-15; OS 4:173-174.

<sup>169</sup> Wallace, *Geneva*, p.127.

<sup>170</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, pp.270-76; CO28:76, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, 23:1-3, 'We hear the curse that is pronounced in the Psalms on all those who do not make Jerusalem to be the chief source of their joy, in other words, those who no longer judge the common good of the Church [*le bien commun de l'Eglise*] to be more important than all the riches

use of earthly benefits (*bonorum terrestrium*) by the lesson of Scripture.<sup>171</sup> According to Calvin, Scripture attests that major premises, such as ‘the present life as a pilgrimage’, act as fundamental rules which direct believers to use things on earth correctly as ‘helps necessary for living’, and for their ‘delight and good cheer (*oblectamento ac hilaritati*)’. As he states, ‘if we must simply pass through this world, there is no doubt we ought to use its good things [*bonis*] in so far as they help rather than hinder our course’.<sup>172</sup>

According to Calvin, when believers rightly appreciate and receive ‘the benefits [*bona*] that are daily conferred on us by God’, namely, when they use these benefits for the common good of the church and for the profit of their neighbours, they are shown ‘the inheritance of eternal glory’ as a prior privilege. Moreover, the relationship of gratitude between God the heavenly Father and the children of God is made manifest.<sup>173</sup> As he explains: ‘we begin in the present life, through various benefits [*variis beneficiis*], to taste the sweetness of the divine generosity [*divinae benignitatis suavitatem*]...the earthly life [*terrenam vitam*] we live is a gift of God’s kindness [*divinae clementiae munus*]...we ought to remember it and be thankful’.<sup>174</sup>

Calvin argues that the purpose of God who gives humanity the resources for this present life is the fulfilment of the two attributes of human profit mentioned above, namely, necessity (*necessitati*) and delight (*oblectamento*). As he says:

Now if we ponder to what end God created food, we shall find that he meant not only to provide for necessity but also for delight and good cheer. Thus the purpose of clothing, apart from necessity, was comeliness and decency. In grasses, trees, and fruits, apart from their various uses, there is beauty of appearance and pleasantness of order [cf. Gen. 2:9]...Did he [God] not, in short, render many things attractive [*commendabiles*] to us, apart from their necessary use [*necessarium usum*]?<sup>175</sup>

Therefore, Calvin’s thoughts on the common good are not simply restricted to the level of economic justice, but also embrace cultural and aesthetic values. Battles rightly

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of this world. The faithful must strive for the Church of God’s growth and expansion and when that happens, this should create more joy in them than all their other possessions, the things they delight in, the things of this world that they desire’. [My translation.]

<sup>171</sup> 3.10.1. p.719.

<sup>172</sup> 3.10.1. p.720.

<sup>173</sup> Regarding Children of Grace, See Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1993), pp.87-123.

<sup>174</sup> 3.9.3. pp.714-15; OS 4:173.

suggests that, according to Calvin, humanity should recognize the value of beauty beyond its mere utility.<sup>176</sup> The entire value of the common good cannot only be measured in terms of its economic worth or its ability to fulfil life's material necessities through sharing; rather, it must also be evaluated in terms of its aesthetic worth and its ability to fulfil the cultural necessity according to God's purpose. As Calvin argues:

And the natural qualities themselves of things demonstrate sufficiently to what end and extent we may enjoy them...will it be unlawful for our eyes to be affected by that [great] beauty [of the flowers], or our [nostril's] sense of smell by the sweetness of that odour?...Did he not so distinguish colours as to make some more lovely [*gratiores*] than others?...Did he not endow gold and silver, ivory and marble, with a loveliness that renders them more precious than other metals or stones?<sup>177</sup>

Taking a step further, Calvin considers the believer's present life of self-denial, where the gifts of God are used for the common good, as a divine calling. This is discussed by Wallace, who notes correctly the flexibility and watchfulness in Calvin's understanding of the divine calling based upon his perspective of the common sharing of labour in order 'to fulfil some useful function in the life of the social body to which he belongs'.<sup>178</sup> For Calvin, this communal labour, 'the burden of hard toil'<sup>179</sup> caused by Adam's pollution, is transformed into participation in the goodness of God by the grace of Christ. As he clarifies, 'the pious feel more deeply that God is good, and enjoy the sweetness of his paternal indulgence'.<sup>180</sup>

Therefore, one can say that the vocational ethics in Calvin's understanding of the common good may be regarded as being rooted in the believer's right attitude towards the calling of God, which is given to each believer to fulfil his or her life within the community. This can be illustrated by four points. First, the believer's act of looking at the

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<sup>175</sup> 3.10.2. p.721.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.; see also note 180.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.; Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp.137-140.

<sup>178</sup> See Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.155 According to Wallace, Calvin believed that the believer's duty to 'mind his own business' within divine calling does not mean an 'isolated specialization'. This rule speaks about 'a common life in society in which men must care for each other and share with each other' (Ibid., p.154). See also Comm. *Genesis*. 3:19, CO 23:75; Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 7:20; CO 49:415, Calvin's viewpoint of human labour designed for the common good will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

<sup>179</sup> Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.155.

<sup>180</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 3:19, p.176.

gift-giver may prevent the believer from abusing God's gifts.<sup>181</sup> Secondly, believers, by their aspiration to eternal life, come to 'know how to bear poverty peaceably and patiently, as well as to bear abundance moderately'.<sup>182</sup> Thirdly, if believers are poor and 'have narrow and slender resources', they are able to learn by experience the 'rule of moderation' by their right understanding of earthly possession as divine trust.<sup>183</sup> In addition, this attitude shows rich believers another rule 'with which to regulate the use of earthly things'.<sup>184</sup> God's intention to give material gifts in this present life is to satisfy and be profitable to the community, not just to individuals. This is the correct standard to evaluate the gifts of God given to believers. As Calvin explains, 'besides, Scripture has a third rule with which to regulate the use of earthly things...It decrees that all those things were so given to us by the kindness of God, and so destined for our benefit [*in commodum nostrum destinatas*], that they are, as it were, entrusted to us, and we must so arrange it'.<sup>185</sup>

Finally, Calvin states that one ought to 'look to' the Lord's calling as the basis of one's way of life.<sup>186</sup> In addition, he emphasizes that 'the Lord's calling is in everything [*in omni re*] the beginning and foundation of well-doing [*bene agendi*]'.<sup>187</sup> Thus, one can suggest that the 'Lord's calling' is fundamental to the believer's doing good in the pursuit of his or her own vocation. Calvin uses the imagery of a sentry post (*statio*) to describe the various kinds of living that each individual has received from God as their calling (*vocationes*).<sup>188</sup> Through this language, he clearly presents the duty of the steward in this present life as a gift of God's grace: 'For it [the earthly life] is like a sentry post [*stationis*] at which the Lord has posted us, which we must hold until he recalls us'.<sup>189</sup> The purpose of the life of the steward is to glorify the name of God and to act in a way that is maximally conducive to God's glory.<sup>190</sup>

Therefore, one can recognize that in order to encourage the believer's endeavour to do good, Calvin uses the language of stewardship and calling to demonstrate the various

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<sup>181</sup> 3.10.3. pp.721-22.

<sup>182</sup> 3.10.4. p.722.

<sup>183</sup> 3.10.5. p.723.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.; see also Comm. *Luke*. 16:24.

<sup>186</sup> 3.10.6. p.724

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> 3.9.4. p.716.

lives given by God to believers for the common good in the community. As such, one can suggest that this language plays a crucial role in the formation of his theology of the common good.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has shown that, for Calvin, self-denial, led by the union with Christ and a renewal of God's image within it, is the most important way of living for Christians, and forms the foundation of their right relationship with God and neighbours. It includes communal as well as individual ethics and is central to his thoughts on the common good.

In this chapter, we have seen that, in Calvin's mind, Christian sanctification, especially self-denial, can be understood in terms of Trinitarian participation and through the idea of engrafting; to follow the example of Christ's double mortification by inward self-denial and outward bearing of the cross. From this premise, Calvin argues that there are three steps which believers must follow in order to participate in the divine economy: consecration, self-denial and the life for the common good. There are also two obstacles which hinders this: ungodliness and worldly desires. This chapter has shown how Calvin illustrates the notion of the common good with his language of God's gifts, which must be shared amongst the community, not purely for the individual, within a spirit of stewardship described as the rule of love. For Calvin, the bearing of the cross is essential training through which God's children receive the image of Christ in order to live a sanctified life for the common good by recognizing their suffering as a condition of both self-discipline and gratitude. In this manner, a believer's present life serves as a pilgrimage in which they must recognise both the utility and beauty of earthly things and use them correctly for the spiritual common good. Furthermore, Calvin proposes that, in so doing, believers must set their self-denial as a cornerstone to eliminate the counterfeit goodness of humanity, taking instead the true goodness of God, and thus contributing to the common good of the church.

To sum up, Calvin's understanding of Christian self-denial is composed of both a divine and moral level, following the pattern of Christ, so his notion of the common good of the church based on this doctrine of sanctification can be seen as being composed of

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

both a spiritual and social level. In other words, Calvin's thoughts on believers' sanctification by Trinitarian participation in union with Christ, in the Spirit appear to contain a notion that the common good has both divine and moral modes, particularly manifested in self-denial and freedom.

Given these conclusions about the relation between Christian sanctification and the common good, it will be important now to consider in more detail Calvin's thought about the three stages and uses of the Law and also the Decalogue. This will illuminate further his notion of the common good both at divine and social levels.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE LAW AND THE COMMON GOOD**

The previous chapter concluded that, for Calvin, when the believer receives the power of sanctification to live a life of self-denial, this follows the model of Christ's life in the work of the Holy Spirit. Believers are then enabled to participate in a life for the common good of the church or for the good and edification of their neighbours both at the spiritual and social level. In this chapter, there will be a further consideration of how Calvin's understanding of the common good relates to his understanding of the three stages of the Law: before the Fall, after the Fall, and in Christ. The discussion will contemplate how his conceptualization of these three stages of the Law contributed to the formation of his thoughts on the common good of the church and humankind. In this context, it is argued that Calvin's understanding of the Ten Commandments can be reinterpreted from the perspective of his idea of the common good.

To provide a background to the discussion, this chapter will first elucidate Calvin's ideas about the nature and role of the Law in relation to humanity's voluntary sharing of the divine gift for the benefit of the community, as discussed in Chapter Three. Thereafter, there will be a focus on Calvin's ideas about the common good according to his understanding of the three uses of the Law. The discussion of the Law in Christ (using Christian freedom as a case study) will focus on a different facet of believers' sanctified life for the common good from that seen in the previous chapter. There will then follow a clarification of Calvin's thoughts on the common good in his detailed discussion of the Ten Commandments.

The discussion will focus on the character of the three stages of the Law related to the Fall and to Redemption in Christ in terms of both the common good of the church and human society. In particular, to understand better Calvin's thoughts on the common good in terms of the Ten Commandments, the discussion will focus on the two tables of these commandments from the perspective of both the second and third uses of the Law, considering the relationship between the Law and the community of faith and civil society.

#### 4.1. The nature of the Law in terms of the common good

It is notable that Calvin clearly stresses that God gives the Law to humanity to secure the social order for the common good through his analysis of Moses' teaching on marital law by saying that:

It is true that Moses writes that, it is so we can understand all the good that comes out of a man being joined and united to his wife...here God is very much for the common good [*Dieu a ici regarde au bien commun*]. Now, it is true that this law was designed to institute order and stability in Israel...We should always examine the objectives that God had [in creating these laws] and takes the aspects that are relevant to us, the aspects that we have in common with the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

What then is the image of the Law in Calvin's theology of the common good? Is it a divine gift for the community, or a debt through which burdens are imposed upon each individual? In other words, is it a gift for mutual sharing, or a loan which humanity must pay off forever?

According to gift theologians, Calvin believes that there is no reciprocal space existing between God and humanity, as God is the sole gift-giver and humanity the passive gift-receiver.<sup>2</sup> This interpretation of Calvin's theology would imply that he did not view the role of the Law as a driving force behind divine-human communication or as a source of humanity's cheerful sharing of divine gifts. Rather, he understood the Law as focused merely upon 'a duty-based legalism', nothing more than the demanding system of a heavy and burdensome duty that believers must carry out in order to pursue the common good of the whole society.<sup>3</sup> This is an idea found in Zemon Davis' illustration of Calvin's teaching on the essential gift-giving and the incidental gift-reception in the believer's life.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CO 28:157, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*. 24:1-6, [My translation.]

<sup>2</sup> John Milbank, "Alternative Protestantism", in *Creation, Covenant and Participation: Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, ed. James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthius (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2005), pp.25-41; Stephen H. Webb, *The Gifting God: A Trinitarian Ethics of Excess*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.95-98; Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), pp.114-123. Regarding this debate, see also Todd Billings, "Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ", PhD. Diss. (Harvard University Divinity School, 2005), p.186.

<sup>3</sup> Kathryn Tanner appraises Calvin's setting of the language of tenancy within 'the dominant motif of gracious beneficence' seems to be unsuccessful since the task demanded by God's gift-giving purpose (the *Institutes*, 3.7.5.), by its inevitable 'legal requirement', brings out 'a fundamental disruption or subversion of the language of gift, loan, and debt, *Economy of Grace*, pp.48-49.

<sup>4</sup> Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, p.119.



However, according to Reformed grace theologians, this reading of Calvin's theology of the Law ought to be challenged, as it may fail to recognize Calvin's dynamic and mutual understanding of the Law in divine-human participation, which is intrinsic to his understanding of community ethics.<sup>5</sup> Instead, they identify within Calvin's writings a notion of the believer's volunteering mutuality with God and neighbour by analysing his Trinitarian mode of the Law in believers' union with God and Christ. As Billings explains:

The original *telos* of the law is still the *telos* of the law for Christians: union with God...The law is a gift from God, intended to evoke a grateful, active response...The revelation of God's will in the law is a precious gift, showing how God seeks us out for relationship and gives us all that we have. Thus, we have occasion to "examine" how "indebted" we are to God. Yet, the obedience the law requires is not a grudging submission. Rather, as believers taste of the oneness with God accomplished for believers through Christ, they experience joy.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, according to Billings, Calvin unfolds his understanding of the Law in a space of mutuality and volunteering between God and humanity. With regard to this 'free and spontaneous interplay between God and humanity', Hesselink suggests Calvin's employment of the term 'sweet/sweetness' is a key concept in order to elucidate the mutual relation of love between God's Trinitarian mode for alluring humanity by divine sweetness and humanity's attraction to this sweetness.<sup>7</sup> Thus, one can see that the common good of the church and society towards which Calvin aims is not established by a duty-based legalism imposed upon believers. Nor is the common good that Calvin wants to establish through the Law one that is obtained through a burdensome legalism or at the cost of the believer's hard labour. Rather, the most significant foundations of Calvin's

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<sup>5</sup> Whilst there seems to be a 'commonality between the receiving of grace and the active life of Christian self-giving and love' in Milbank's reciprocal gift-paradigm and Calvin's activated gift-paradigm, one can find a contrast between Milbank's criticism of Calvin's grace as unilateral within negative anthropology and Billings's positive discussion of Calvin's double grace within a christologically-conditioned anthropology. See J. Todd Billings, "John Milbank's Theology of the "Gift" and Calvin's Theology of Grace", pp.87-105.

<sup>6</sup> Billings, "Participation", pp.189-90.

<sup>7</sup> John Hesselink, "Calvin, Theologian of Sweetness", *CTJ* 37 (2002), pp.318-332. Hesselink states that 'Calvin affirms again and again that God does not force his will upon us but in various ways seeks to allure or attract us sweetly to respond to his offers and invitations' (p.23). In contrast, Webb criticizes 'the way in which both Gerrish and Calvin persistently discuss gratitude in the economic terms of repayment, exchange, debt, and labour' whilst recognizing Gerrish's successful drawing of the two movements of grace and gratitude in Calvin. Webb's analysis on the structural defects of Calvin's gratitude between God's singular gift and human's inevitably belaboured and guilt response seems to be due to his lack of attention to Calvin's reciprocal language of 'sweetness' to produce believer's joyful and inexhaustible response, see *The Gifting God*, pp.94-98.

understanding of the legal basis of the common good are mutual sharing and mutuality of love amongst believers. These are intrinsic parts of the life of believers who participate in Christ by the Spirit.<sup>8</sup> In line with the grace theologians, one may suggest that Calvin conceptualizes the common good as an ethical product, which is established by mutual love between God and humanity through the rule of Law in Christ by the Spirit.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the Law, as Christ's 'figure and shadow' (with Christ as its 'substance and truth'), given 'not only to the Israelites but also to all men of every race and place' by embodying human nature reconciled to God through Christ, encourages volunteering, mutuality, and charity amongst believers and indeed all humanity.<sup>10</sup>

In the rest of this chapter, there will be an assessment of the validity of grace theologians' understanding of Calvin's theology of the Law as a divine gift, and, furthermore, an investigation of how this contributes to an understanding of his theology of the common good. In order to do this, Calvin's writings on the three stages of the Law, on Christian freedom, and on the Ten Commandments will be examined in detail. This will help to determine whether Calvin viewed the Law as a legalistic duty imposed by God upon humanity, or as a divine gift cheerfully shared by humanity for the common good of the community.

## **4.2. The Three Stages of the Law in relation to the common good**

### **4.2.1. The Law before the Fall**

In his first edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin defines the primal function of the Law through his statement that 'the law teaches us God's will'.<sup>11</sup> He believes that, in the Law, one can see God's original plan, intention, and purpose towards the human community. In his commentary on *Romans* 7:21, Calvin defines 'the law of God' as 'the rule of

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<sup>8</sup> Billings, "Participation", pp.188-191, 205-221; Hesselink, "John Calvin on the Law and Christian Freedom", *EX* 11 (1995), pp.86-87. For Calvin, the Spirit transforms believers as children of God according to God's image 'by means of the Law, which is no longer an external accusing power but a helpful friend implanted in their being'.

<sup>9</sup> CO 27:410, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*. 16:18-19, 'The rule of Law is a testament to God's grace and goodness, we should place the value on it that it merits and everyone, as far as they are able to, should work at maintaining the rule of Law, because we demonstrate that we are sworn enemies of peace and the common good [*nous sommes ennemis mortels de paix, et du bien commun*] if we do not love the rule of Law'. [My translation.]

<sup>10</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.170; c.f. *Inst.* 1559, 2.7. and 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1.4, p.23.

righteousness...by which our life is rightly formed'.<sup>12</sup> According to Calvin, this knowledge of God, who is 'infinite wisdom, righteousness, goodness, truth, power and life',<sup>13</sup> is 'the primal and simple knowledge' before the Fall, giving humanity, represented as Adam, the knowledge of 'what befits us and is proper to his [God's] glory' as well as 'what is to our advantage' through knowing God.<sup>14</sup> This knowledge of God is originally understood as religious, ethical, teleological, and practical; it is mainly built upon Calvin's doctrine of God as 'the fountain of every good' (*fontem omnium bonorum*) and God's preservation of the universe by His goodness.<sup>15</sup> This divine goodness raises human piety composed of trust and reverence in the human mind since humanity love and revere God as Father.<sup>16</sup> Calvin also defines the knowledge of humanity, saying that, 'Adam, parent of us all, created in the image and likeness of God' receives from God 'these gifts of grace' such as 'wisdom, righteousness, holiness' through his 'clinging' to God, that is, within a mutual relationship.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Calvin premises that God is the Father who gives all His goodness to Adam for the welfare of the human community.<sup>18</sup> Namely, before the Fall, there existed between God and humanity a father-child relationship, which included a mutual and voluntary love based upon tender protection and gratuitous piety.<sup>19</sup> Thus, according to Calvin, God provides the gift of the Law in creation in order to invite humanity into a relationship of mutual love. The obedience of the children of God to the Law originates from the fatherly love of God.<sup>20</sup> God descends and enters into 'a common treaty' with humanity and through this gift of the Law, humanity is united to God;<sup>21</sup> this 'constitutes our happiness and glory'.<sup>22</sup> That is, the Law is regarded by Calvin as a mode of accommodation that enables communication between God and humanity before the Fall.

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<sup>12</sup> Comm. *Romans* 7:21, p.269.

<sup>13</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1.1-2, pp.20-21.

<sup>14</sup> 1.2.1. p.39,

<sup>15</sup> 1.2.1. pp.40-41; CO 2:34.

<sup>16</sup> 1.2.2. pp.41-43.

<sup>17</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1.1-2, pp.20-21; Comm. *Psalms* 148:1-14; Comm. *Daniel* 3:59-63

<sup>18</sup> 1.14.2: 'We ought in the very order of things diligently to contemplate God's fatherly love toward mankind, in that he did not create Adam until he had lavished upon the universe all manner of good things...in thus assuming the responsibility of a foreseeing and diligent father of the family he shows his wonderful goodness toward us' (pp.161-62).

<sup>19</sup> Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, pp.21-31, 41-49, 87-123; Webb, *The Gifting God*, pp.94-98.

<sup>20</sup> Comm. *Deuteronomy* 10:12; CO 24:723.

<sup>21</sup> Calvin, *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, trans. B. W. Farley (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), pp.39, 45; CO 26:237, 242. According to Billing, for Calvin, 'the original *telos* of the law is still the *telos* of the law for Christians: union with God' ('Participation', p.189).

<sup>22</sup> Calvin, *Ten Commandments*, p.39; CO 26:237.

What, then, is the most crucial principle in the Law given to humanity by God in creation? First, the Law is a gift of love based upon intimate mutuality; that is, the primal relationship set up between God the heavenly Father and humanity as His children. As Calvin says:

Moses is not considering God as armed for the punishment of the sins of men; but as the Artificer, the Architect, the bountiful Father of a family... God had *planted*, accommodating himself, by a simple and uncultivated style, to the capacity of the vulgar...God, then, had planted Paradise in a place which he had especially embellished with every variety of delights, with abounding fruits, and with all other most excellent gifts.<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, within the community of the children of God, the Law functions as a form of gift of sharing that facilitates a mutual love between all humanity.<sup>24</sup> Before the Fall, the Law functioned in creation as a means of guidance for the children of God. One can say that this primal function corresponds to the third use of the Law for the restored believer in Christ. Namely, before the Fall, the negative use of the Law, that is, as a means of condemnation and accusation, was not in operation. Rather, the primal objective of the Law in creation was to unite humanity with God and, by doing so, to enable them to experience happiness: ‘if we wish to allow God to be our master, then we shall discover in his school all perfect wisdom. For the law exists precisely to make us prudent. Then further it contains (as we have said) articles...and then it shows us the rule for right living’.<sup>25</sup> In other words, in creation, humanity, created in the image of God, was able to carry out ‘a holy and upright life’,<sup>26</sup> united with God in acts of cheerful volunteering which embodied ‘a zeal for righteousness and goodness’.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Calvin argues that ‘knowledge of ourselves lies first in considering what we were given at creation and how generously God continues his favour toward us...In the beginning God fashioned us after his image [Gen. 1:27] that he might arouse our minds both to zeal for virtue and to meditation upon eternal life’.<sup>28</sup> He thus declares, ‘let each one of us examine how much

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<sup>23</sup> Comm. *Genesis* 2.2, pp.104-5; 2.8, p.113. There is also reference to Calvin’s positive image of ‘the tree of life’ as ‘a symbol and memorial of the life’ from God (2.8-9, pp.115-17).

<sup>24</sup> See Comm. *Genesis* 1:27-8. This will be explained in more detail later in this chapter, in relation to the second table of the Ten Commandments

<sup>25</sup> Calvin, *Ten Commandments*, p.39; CO 26:237.

<sup>26</sup> 2.1.2. p.242.

<sup>27</sup> 2.1.3. p.244.

<sup>28</sup> 2.1.1. p.242.

we are indebted to him to the end that we might be that much more motivated to serve him'.<sup>29</sup>

Thus the Law before the Fall, as represented in Calvin's theology of creation, is a divine gift to humanity, which enables humanity both to remember God's benefits and show gratitude to God for these benefits shed upon them. This is based upon the assumption that God is the spring or fountain of all good, and so encourages mutual and voluntary love between humanity and God.<sup>30</sup> For instance, the purpose of God's command to Adam, prohibiting him from accessing the tree of knowledge, is rooted in God's desire to let Adam know that he is 'willingly under God's command'.<sup>31</sup> It is the Law that God set up in creation in order to express the mutual mode of divine-human relations: God wants voluntary obedience from Adam, and Adam is able to respond accordingly.<sup>32</sup> For Calvin, the Law of God provided in creation for humanity before the Fall is like the gift of love from the merciful Father to His children. As Dowey states, the Law before the Fall is like a 'mode of relation' with God, and thus, is a primal method to live in right union with God.<sup>33</sup>

To summarize, before the Fall, the function of the Law given to humanity is a divine gift that enabled mutual communication between God the creator and humanity.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Calvin, *Ten Commandments*, p.42; CO 26:239.

<sup>30</sup> 1.2.1. p.40. In Gerrish's analysis of Calvin's understanding of divine gifts to humanity in creation, the correlation between God's goodness and His giving good things to humanity for their benefit whilst in His fatherly care is central (*Grace and Gratitude*, pp.21-31, 41-49). In particular, Gerrish rightly observes that the faith of God's children in their acknowledgement of God as the sole author of good is woven tightly together with the Law as serving God with obedience (ibid., p.26).

<sup>31</sup> 2.1.4. p.245; Comm. *Genesis* 2.16, pp.125-6: 'A law is imposed upon him in token of his subjection...the prohibition of one tree was a test of obedience...it was necessary that man, adorned and enriched with so many excellent gifts, should be held under restraint, lest he should break forth into licentiousness'.

<sup>32</sup> Grace theologians, such as Billings, argue that gift theologians, such as Milbank, Natalie Zemon Davis, and Kathryn Tanner, do not properly recognize the character of mutual love placed in the primal mode of relation in Calvin's understanding of the Law, especially its third use.

<sup>33</sup> Edward A. Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Thought*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), p.225; c.f. Billings, "Participation", p.188.

<sup>34</sup> As the key ground of the law as a gift of God-man relationship, it is interesting to note Hoekema's perspective on the covenant of grace in Calvin. Hoekema points out that, though Calvin did not explicitly use the terms 'unilateral' origin or 'bilateral' fulfilment, as is done by later covenant theology, he attempts to clarify an elaborated balance between the priority of 'the underserved grace of God' and the subsequent establishment of the mutual obligation on the part of both God and humanity by laying emphasis on the former's volunteering condescension and the latter's thankful but solemn obedience. See "The Covenant of Grace in Calvin's Teaching", in *An*

Moreover, the Law also served as a means of mutual fellowship between human beings whose solidarity lay in their shared image of God. Thus, through the gift of the Law, humanity, in cheerfulness and obedience, not only communicates with God but also with their fellow human beings as children of God. Dowey's understanding of the mutuality of the Law as the primal 'mode of relation' in Calvin is helpful to our understanding of the primal and formative aspects of communal ethics, such as love of neighbours, which are included in Calvin's understanding of the Law. For Calvin, the Law in creation is an ontological characteristic of human communal ethics. He believes that human volunteering and mutuality are primary functions of the Law, helping to overcome each individual's selfishness and isolation, and contributing to human solidarity in pursuit of the common good. This theory is helpful to develop a perception of how Calvin understands the three uses of the Law in terms of its three stages (before the Fall, after the Fall, and in Christ) within the context of his theology of the common good.<sup>35</sup>

Such positive functions of the Law were, however, short-lived; as will be discussed in the following section, Calvin believed that, after the Fall, the role of the Law was to undergo dramatic changes in response to the failure of human-divine communication and the fracturing of communal existence among humankind.

#### **4.2.2. The Law after the Fall**

##### **4.2.2.1. The first use of the Law**

According to Calvin, after the Fall, the primal function of the Law as the proper mode of communication between humanity and God was damaged. After the Fall, the Law was no longer regarded by humanity as a divine gift. Though there still remained 'a sense of divinity' (*Deitatis sensum*)<sup>36</sup> and 'conscience' in humanity, these did not perform their original function. That is, humanity lost their identity as children of God which they had

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*Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*, ed. Richard Gamble (New York, London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), pp.140-161.

<sup>35</sup> Muller argue that the multiple but integrated legal relationships between God and Adam, God and Moses, and Adam and Christ, 'stand in a positive relation to the later language of a covenant of works or nature', Richard Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.182; see also Peter Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2001), pp.126-193.

enjoyed before the Fall and thus, God is regarded no longer as a loving father but as an authoritarian judge, since ‘conscience presses us within and shows in our sin just cause for his disowning us and not regarding or recognizing us as his sons’.<sup>37</sup> As result, post-Fall, the Law is no longer a gift of mutual communication between humanity and God but rather, is the medium for recognizing its unavoidable split. In other words, the Law after the Fall functions as a ‘mirror’<sup>38</sup> that shows sinners how far removed they are from their former union with God. This, for Calvin, is the first use of the Law. Therefore, from the time of the Fall, the Law takes on a decisively negative and accidental function,<sup>39</sup> which is clearly contrasted with the following function of the gospel: ‘the law...as it simply prescribes the rule of a good life, does not renew men’s hearts...The office of the law is to show us the disease, in such a way as to show us, at the same time, no hope of cure: the office of the gospel is, to bring a remedy to those that were past hope...bringing him to Christ’.<sup>40</sup>

How then does this first use of the Law contribute to Calvin’s theology of the common good? In his 1536 edition of the *Institutes*, he defines the first use of the Law as follows: ‘First, while showing God’s righteousness, that is, what God requires of us, it admonishes each one of his unrighteousness and convicts him of his sin’.<sup>41</sup> Calvin believes that ‘the severity of the law takes away from us all self-deception’.<sup>42</sup> As he clearly manifests, ‘the law was given for the purpose of abasing proud hearts which swelled with vain confidence’.<sup>43</sup> This first use of the Law, as a means of demolishing believers’ self-deception, urges and expedites believers to live a life of humility and simplicity, rather than one of self-centred pride and vanity. Consequently, though this is a negative function of the Law, it could be regarded as the most primary (though indirect) contribution to laying the foundations that allow believers to live a life for the common good; that is, for the benefit of their neighbours. From this perspective, one may suggest that the first use of

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<sup>36</sup> 1.4.4. p.51; OS 3:44; 1.15.2, 2.2.22 etc; *Inst.* 1559, 1.3-6; 2.6.1-2; 2.7; 3.19.

<sup>37</sup> 2.6.1. p.341. C.f. 2.6.4; 2.9.1.

<sup>38</sup> John Leith, “Creation and Redemption: Law and Gospel in the Theology of John Calvin”, in *An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*, p.20.

<sup>39</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians* 3:7, p.176: ‘In the first place, he [Paul] calls the law the ministry of death...it was not of perpetual duration; but, instead of this, its condition was temporary and fading...he calls it the ministry of condemnation’.

<sup>40</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians* 3:7, p.178.

<sup>41</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1.33, p.48; also 2.7.3. p.352.

<sup>42</sup> 2.7.6. p.354.

the Law is not irrelevant to Calvin's theology of the common good; rather, this function provides the foremost preliminary space for believers' third use of the Law for the common good. As Calvin teaches:

For man, blinded and drunk with self-love...needs to be cured of another disease, that of pride, with which...he is sick...But after he is compelled to weigh his life in the scales [*trutina*] of the law...he discovers that he is a long way from holiness...The law is like a mirror [*speculum*]..."Through the law comes knowledge of sin" [Rom. 3:20]. There he [Paul] notes only its first function.<sup>44</sup>

Here, Calvin's two metaphors of the 'scales' and 'mirror' demonstrate the portrait of humanity after the Fall, not in relation to the fear and wrath of God but in light of the original office of the Law to reveal the rule of godly and upright living to humanity.<sup>45</sup> In addition, it is notable that Calvin uses the phrase 'naked and empty-handed' to explain the plight of sinners after the Fall. In line with Augustine,<sup>46</sup> he makes the statement that the function of accusation within the Law does not only evaluate human behaviour negatively, but also has a positive nuance in that it clearly demonstrates humanity's gratitude for the grace of God, which is given to humanity through the Law.<sup>47</sup> The first use of the Law paradoxically shows that 'he [God] never tires in repeatedly benefiting us [humanity] in heaping new gifts upon us'.<sup>48</sup> Thus, one can suggest that Calvin recognizes even the first use of the Law within the context of the mutual love, which still remained between humanity and God, even though it had been severely compromised and damaged by the Fall. In Calvin's view, the first use of the Law is not excluded from the general characteristics of the Law, that is, holiness, justice, love, and goodness.<sup>49</sup> Whilst the first use of the Law serves only to make 'wicked' unbelievers 'terrified', for the children of

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<sup>43</sup> Comm. *Isaiah* 61:1, p.305; CO 37:372.

<sup>44</sup> 2.7.6-7. pp.354-5; CO 2:257-258.

<sup>45</sup> Byung-Ho Moon, *Christ the Mediator of the Law: Calvin's Christological Understanding of the Law as the Rule of Living and Life-Giving*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2006), p.236.

<sup>46</sup> 2.7.7. p.356: 'If the Spirit of grace is absent, the law is present only to accuse and kill us'.

<sup>47</sup> In relation to this issue, Pattison suggests several marked parallels between the function of the law and the ultimate suffering, poverty, and afflictions of Christians in Calvin's doctrine of Christology and Christian life. According to this doctrine, the correlation between the first use of the law and the function of poverty is to manifest knowledge of oneself, that is, who one is, what humbles human pride, and what is the sole foundation for the believer's life for the common good. See *Poverty*, pp.218-221.

<sup>48</sup> 2.7.7. p.356.

<sup>49</sup> 2.7.1-9. pp.348-358.



God, ‘the knowledge of the law should have another purpose’.<sup>50</sup> As Calvin states, ‘In the precepts of the law, God is but the rewarder of perfect righteousness, which all of us lack, and conversely, the severe judge of evil deeds. But in Christ his face shines, full of grace and gentleness, even upon us poor and unworthy sinners’.<sup>51</sup> Namely, believers depend only upon the mercy of Christ in their ‘naked and empty-handed’ state in order to ‘seize upon it [God’s mercy] alone for righteousness and merit’.<sup>52</sup> Citing Augustine once again, Calvin seeks to emphasize the gift of grace given through the accusation of the Law: ‘The law was given for this purpose...for you, thus helpless, unworthy, and destitute, to flee to grace [*ad gratiam confugeres*]’.<sup>53</sup>

Thus Calvin identifies the two opposite effects of the first use of the Law upon believers and unbelievers. For believers, it functions as an ‘accusation’, from its punitive office, that leads them to realize the weakness of human flesh, by revealing their identity as sinners and the nature of their righteousness, and leads them humbly to seek the place of ‘grace’ from God, that is justification by Christ.<sup>54</sup> For, the condemnation of the Law is neither essential nor ultimate for the children of God.<sup>55</sup> This then leads them to a life of

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<sup>50</sup> 2.7.8. p.356, According to the consensus within contemporary studies of Calvin on the three uses of the Law, the first use is regarded as theological since it works for justification. In addition, the second use is political since it is related to outward activity, whilst the third use is regarded as normative since it is related to sanctification. See John Hesselink, *Calvin’s Concept of the Law*, (Allison Park: Pickwick Publication, 1992), pp.217-257; Edward Dowey, “The Third Use of the Law in Calvin’s Theology”, *SP* 49.3 (1958), pp.20-27; Moon, *Christ The Mediator*, pp.235-245; Merwyn S. Johnson, “Calvin’s Handling of the Third Use of the Law and Its Problems”, in *Calviniana, Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 1988), pp.33-50; Victor A. Shepherd, *The Nature and Functions of Faith in the Theology of John Calvin*, (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1983), pp.137-156.

<sup>51</sup> 2.7.8. p.357.

<sup>52</sup> 2.7.8. p.357; *Sermon on Genesis*. 15.6 (SC 11/2. 758); Calvin, in line with Augustine, states that ‘the merits were gifts of God, and not men’s own. For whatever is such, that is from men themselves, is evil, but good things are the gifts of God’. See *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, p.153.

<sup>53</sup> 2.7.9. p.357.

<sup>54</sup> According to Moon, there co-exists for Calvin both ‘*Christius exemplar legis*’ (Christ the example of the Law) working for the office of instruction in the Law and ‘*Christus Mediator legis*’ (Christ the mediator of the Law) working for the office of exhortation in the Law. Therefore, the Spirit of Christ allows the Law to function not only as a rule of living (*regula vivendi*) but also as a life-giving rule (*regula vivificandi*). See Moon, *Christ The Mediator*, p.242. As Calvin states, ‘Christ in regenerating us gives life to the Law and shows Himself to be the source of life...Christ is the Spirit because he animates us with the life-giving power of His Spirit’ (Comm. 2 *Corinthians*. 3:17, p.48-49; CO 50:45-46).

<sup>55</sup> With regard to the first use of the Law, Calvin seems to give his focus not only to its negative, punitive, or instrumental affect but also to its positive, reflective, and existential function. This

self-denial, which in turn serves as the primary condition in Calvin's doctrine of sanctification for living their life for the common good. Thus, one can say that, for Calvin, the first use of the Law -- as a gift of God -- functions as the necessary, primary, and preliminary condition for the believer's participation in the common good. However, for unbelievers, this positive aspect of the divine gift does not apply. As will be discussed in the following section, unbelievers' contribution to the common good can be realized only through the second use of the Law.

#### 4.2.2.2. The second use of the Law

In his first edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin defines the second use of the Law, not as an inner 'restraint' of the human heart but as a 'bridle' to control humanity's 'outward activity (*exteriori opera*)'.<sup>56</sup> Calvin expands upon this in the final edition of the *Institutes*:

The second function of the law is this: at least by fear of punishment to restrain certain men who are untouched by any care for what is just and right unless compelled by hearing the dire threats in the law. But they are restrained, not because their inner mind is stirred or affected, but because, being bridled, so to speak, they keep their hands from outward activity, and hold inside the depravity that otherwise they would wantonly have indulged.<sup>57</sup>

Here, when Calvin states that humanity's 'inner mind is stirred or affected', he is referring to the third use of the Law. This is the gift resulting from believers' unity with God in Christ by the Spirit. However, Calvin believes that the second use of the Law has two effects and he urges humanity to practise the Law when they participate 'in a God-ordained ordering for civil society'.<sup>58</sup> First of all, according to Calvin, the second use of the Law is to protect 'the public community of men' by controlling evildoers and unbelievers.<sup>59</sup> Calvin views this as being deeply related to the character of the moral law

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stands in comparison to Luther's main emphasis on the punitive use of the Law. (*LW* 27.361; c.f. Calvin, Comm. *Galatians*. 4:3).

<sup>56</sup> *Inst.* 1536, p.104; 2.7.10. p.358.

<sup>57</sup> 2.7.10. p.358; OS 3:335-336.

<sup>58</sup> Billings, "Participation", p.196.

<sup>59</sup> 2.7.10. p.359. Schreiner acknowledges that, in Calvin's system of 'participation in the natural world', 'human conscience', as 'the natural instincts and perceptions of law', contributes to the conservation of society by controlling the chaotic forces of human greed. See *The Theatre of His Glory*, p.92; also 2.2.12-16; Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999), pp.248-252, 275-278.

or natural law,<sup>60</sup> which is represented in the second table of the Ten Commandments.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, it positively contributes to the preservation of the social common good, albeit in a passive manner. In addition, Calvin describes the second use of the Law using the image of the bridle to emphasize a sense of fright and shame. This image clearly shows that this use of the Law ‘under fear’ (*sub timore*)<sup>62</sup> functions as a restraint on human desire which is a hindrance to the formation of the social common good.<sup>63</sup> This suggests that, for Calvin, the second use of the Law could play a positive and direct role in the preservation of the common good. For unbelievers may act to destroy the social order if this use of the Law did not exist; it therefore protects the community of faith from the wicked in society. Thus, in Calvin’s mind, the ecclesial common good could be properly protected only when the social common good is maintained. For Calvin, the second use of the Law may directly (though not ultimately) contribute to the common good of humankind and is indirectly helpful to the common good of the church. Regarding this, Calvin puts forward the following argument:

All who are still unregenerate feel – some more obscurely, some more openly – that they are not drawn to obey the law voluntarily, but impelled by a violent fear

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<sup>60</sup> As William Klempa notes, Calvin’s ‘natural law’ precedes ‘moral law’ both historically and psychologically (4.20.16), and ‘the moral law is ultimately identical with natural law’ defined as ‘the uncorrupted, ordered nature of humanity and the world before the Fall’ within one law of a true unity. In the same vein, Calvin’s natural law is also ultimately identical to the divine law regardless of the current disparate relation between the two. See William Klempa, “Calvin on Natural Law” in *John Calvin & the Church: A Prism of Reform*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), pp.78-82; Irena Backus stresses that ‘Calvin’s main concern is to establish a direct link between pagan consciences – the seat of natural moral law – and the civil laws they produced’ based upon the second use of the Law, (“Calvin’s Concept of Natural and Roman Law”, *CTJ* 38 (2003), p.13). Calvin clearly demonstrates the common nature of human conscience by recognizing the idea that the ‘seed of political order is sown in all men’ and the ‘universal impressions of civic order and honesty which are present in all men’s minds’ underlie this second use of the Law in the human community (*ibid.*, pp.12, 15; see also 2.2.13; OS 3:256-57). Also, Calvin’s idea on the moral law for the common good is implied in his statement on the good custom when he teaches that ‘we should learn that whenever there is a custom that has been accepted, when this custom is a good, honest custom, we should adopt it, and the person who tries to change it...is against the common good’, [my translation], CO 49:745, *Sermons on 1 Corinthians* 11:11-16.

<sup>61</sup> Backus rightly apprehends Calvin’s opinion that ‘natural law can, without recourse to the Bible, bring about legislations that are in accord with the second table of the Decalogue’ (“Natural and Roman Law”, p.15; see also 4.20.16; OS 5:487-88).

<sup>62</sup> 2.7.11; OS 3:337; also 2.8.51-59.

<sup>63</sup> CO 49:738, *Sermons on 1 Corinthians* 11:11-16, ‘It is true that it has always been shameful even for unbelievers to reject what was required by the law, because people for whom the common good was unimportant have always been hated [*car on a tousiours deteste telles gens qui n’ont point eu esgard au bien commun*]’. [My translation.]

do so against their will and despite their opposition to it. But this constrained and forced righteousness is necessary for the public community of men [*publicae hominum communitati*], for those tranquillity the Lord herein provided when he took care that everything be not tumultuously confounded.<sup>64</sup>

According to Calvin, unbelievers do not have the inner mind to contribute either to the common good of humankind or to the common good of the church through their voluntary obedience to the Law. Rather, they instinctively pursue their own desires for their private advantage without considering the public good of civil society. The decisive difference between the second use of the Law for unbelievers and the third use of the Law for believers corresponds to the contrast between the language of ‘compelled’ and ‘voluntarily’ in relation to obedience. On the one hand, compelled obedience through the second use of the Law contributes only minimally to the conservation of the common good of the church and society, whilst, on the other hand, voluntary obedience through the third use of the Law makes a maximal contribution to the establishment and development of the common good of the church, society, and humankind. Nevertheless, the second use of the Law – though it is considered as being not essential but extrinsic, not intentional but accidental, not positive but negative – is absolutely vital for the conservation of the social common good after the Fall.<sup>65</sup>

For Calvin, the second use of the Law functions to ensure that the present life of believers prior to their regeneration is *still* oriented towards benefitting society ‘by bearing the yoke of righteousness’.<sup>66</sup> Thus, he appears to believe that the second use of the Law (along with its third use) as ‘tutelage’ has a very important role in shaping the social dimension of the common good.<sup>67</sup> The third use shapes and builds the social common good through the voluntary obedience of believers, whilst the second use also performs this function through the compelled obedience of unbelievers.

In a similar way to the case above regarding the bridle for unbelievers, Calvin teaches the two incidental functions intrinsic to the second use of the Law, which guide those who

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<sup>64</sup> 3.7.10. p.359; *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1.33, p.49. See similar statements in 4.20.3. Related to this topic, Melancthon also puts forward a parallel idea, that is, *publicae pacis causa*, (in *Loci praecipui theologici von 1559*, ed. Hans Engelland (Guetersloh: Bertelsmann, 1952), p.322. Also, see 4.20.14-16.

<sup>65</sup> Billings, “Participation”, p.195.

<sup>66</sup> 2.7.10. p.359.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*; this is related to the pedagogical perspective of Christian freedom in the next section.

are not yet believers before they receive the third and primal use of the Law. These functions contribute to the common good in that they are focused primarily upon the preservation of civil society beyond the function of condemnation and accusation within the first use of the Law. In this light, the second use as ‘tutor’ is no different from the first, in that both aim towards justification, by leading humanity to Christ beyond accusation. For, the Law’s second use teaches and directs believers into a holy and upright life, as does its first use. With regard to the first of these functions, Calvin states:

There are two kinds of men whom the law leads by its tutelage to Christ [*paedagogum ad Christum*]. Of the first kind...because they are full...of the assurance of their own righteousness...they are not fit to receive Christ’s grace unless they first be emptied. Therefore, through the recognition of their own misery, the law brings them down to humility [*ad humilitatem*] in order thus to prepare [*praeparentur*] them to seek what previously they did not realize they lacked.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, the first incidental function of the Law is to teach humility to the self-righteous. Another function is, according to Calvin, to act as a ‘bridle’ (*fraeno*) or ‘reins’ (*fraena*) to those who are in danger of straying from the path of righteousness. As he states: ‘the bridle of the law [*Legis fraeno*] restrained them in some fear and reverence toward God until, regenerated by the Spirit, they began wholeheartedly [*ex animo*] to love him’.<sup>69</sup>

Consequently, for Calvin, the second use of the Law appears to function primarily, not in order to establish the common good of the church, but rather to establish the common good of humankind through the activities of believers and unbelievers.

In order to explore further Calvin’s understanding of the internal order of the Law, attention will now be turned to his discussion of the third use of the Law and Christian freedom within it, that is, its function as a guide for sanctification through believers’ self-denial. It will be argued that the third use of the Law (and Christian freedom) is regarded by Calvin as crucial, not only for the building of the common good of the church, but also as a means of preserving and developing the common good of civil society, in which believers and unbelievers coexist.

#### **4.2.3. The Law in Christ**

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<sup>68</sup> 2.7.11. p.359; OS 3:336-337.

<sup>69</sup> 2.7.11. pp.359-60; OS 3:337. See also 2.8.51-59.

#### 4.2.3.1. The third use of the Law

According to Calvin, ‘the third and principal [*praecipuus*] use [of the Law], which pertains more closely to the proper purpose of the law [*proprium Legis finem*], finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns’.<sup>70</sup> For Calvin, this third use of the Law is the most important and decisive in his theology of the common good. In his final edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin clarifies that this use of the Law principally admonishes and urges believers to lead their life in well doing.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, in this section, there will be an exploration of Calvin’s assertion that the third use of the Law contributes principally and decisively to the common good of the church and society. For Calvin, it is Christ who exchanges the counterfeit goodness of humanity with the true goodness of God. Calvin believes that, through this ‘wonderful exchange’,<sup>72</sup> believers are able to participate in the love of God by receiving the power to perform the Law through Christ. Therefore, for believers, the Law is no longer a debt; rather it is a gift from God, given new meaning through Christ.<sup>73</sup> Compliance with the Law is no longer a dry burden or an impossible mission. Now, according to the ‘good will’ of God, believers, united with Christ, experience liquidation of the debt they owe to the Law. For believers who receive ‘a new heart’ and ‘a new power’ by the Spirit, which enables them to perform the Law,

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<sup>70</sup> 2.7.12. p.360; OS 3:337.

<sup>71</sup> 2.7.12-13. pp.360-61.

<sup>72</sup> 4.17.2. p.1362, See the term “*Mirifica commutatio*”; cf. Luther, “Treatise on Christian Liberty” (1520), in *Works of Martin Luther* II, 318ff; and “Sermon on the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and on the Brotherhoods”, in *Works of Martin Luther* II, pp.11-14.

<sup>73</sup> In contrast to Luther’s emphasis on the law as threat, according to Calvin, ‘for those who trust in God’s promises, however, the law takes the form of a gift, even as it presents the task of the Christian life’. See Jesse Couenhoven, “Grace as Pardon and Power: Pictures of the Christian life in Luther, Calvin, and Barth”, *JRE* 28.1 (2000), pp.69-70. As Bo Holm notes, Luther believes that the economic structure of self-confidence, which runs counter to justification, may be called the structure of law, especially of a law unto death. On the other hand, within the structure of gospel, a total denial of the possibility of giving could serve as an adequate ‘counter-gift’. Thus, the impossibility of giving in the system of law turns into a possibility of giving in the system of the gospel. For that reason, according to Holm’s logic, the structure of law is that of absolute poverty, with a downward trend into negative reciprocity as seen in the economy of grace and gifts in medieval theology, but the structure of gospel is that of abundance and richness, with an upward tendency towards a positive and balanced reciprocity as seen in the economy of grace and gifts within later reformation theology. Accordingly, a balanced reciprocity cannot subsist from a human being’s self-confidence and will, but from God’s giving and human being’s faith and receiving. Also, Holm presents the picture of a larger exchange; the gift of God leads to the gift between neighbours and the gift between neighbours reflects the gift of God. For Holm, the essential aspect of Luther’s theology of the gift is the transfer from the theology of deficiency to

compliance takes on a new and different meaning so that they can delight in this transformed use of the Law.<sup>74</sup>

It is necessary now to focus on the question of how believers, adopted as children of God, follow His Law with voluntary cheerfulness. According to Calvin, believers are ‘sanctified for every good work’ in the ‘newness of life’; their ‘depraved desires’ are mortified through ‘the rich heavenly blessings’ and ‘the Holy Spirit’s gifts’, which are given to humanity through Christ.<sup>75</sup> Between his statement on the Law and that on the Ten Commandments, Calvin makes the following assertion: ‘In short, if we partake of Christ, in Him we shall possess all the heavenly treasures and gifts of the Holy Spirit, which lead us into life and salvation’.<sup>76</sup> Thus, believers’ sanctification is intrinsic to a renewed anthropology, which enables them to practice the Law of God in loving obedience towards their heavenly Father. Moreover, believers’ sanctification is embodied within the Trinitarian gift-giving mode; as Calvin states:

Through him [The Holy Spirit] we are...freely adopted as children of God, sanctified for every good work...God offers to us and gives us in Christ our Lord all these benefits, which include free forgiveness of sins, peace and reconciliation with God, the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit...as it were leaning upon divine goodness...we will recognize all our good to be in him... the faith that furnishes us a taste of divine goodness and mercy, wherein God in his Christ has to do with us...by sure faith, to the knowledge of his gentleness and of his sweetness, which he shows forth in his Christ.<sup>77</sup>

According to Calvin, the Holy Spirit enables the third use of the Law to become the means through which believers enjoy sweet communion with God. It is only through the Spirit that believers participate in the goodness of God by receiving divine gifts of grace. Here, the Law is no longer a coercive power but rather functions in the manner of cheerful communion, stemming from union with Christ, by which a voluntary obedience is realized in the life of believers. One may therefore infer that Calvin understands the third use of the Law from the perspective of the gifts of the Spirit originating from the goodness of God,

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the theology of surplus, which becomes the basis of Lutheran ethics. See “Luther’s Theology of the Gift”, pp.82-86.

<sup>74</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1, 5, pp.23-24.

<sup>75</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1, 5, p.24.

<sup>76</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1, 6, p.24.

<sup>77</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1, 5-6, pp.24-25. See Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, pp.21-31,41-49,63-76.

which are provided through fellowship for the good works of believers.<sup>78</sup> Thus, Calvin's thoughts on the believer's good life for the community correspond to his understanding of the primal purpose of the Law. One can therefore suggest that, for Calvin, the third use of the Law constitutes the core of voluntary and cheerful obedience of believers united with Christ in the Spirit and within their restored mutuality with God. Furthermore, this acts as a basis for the sharing of divine gifts within the community, and, as result, functions as a divine foundation to build the common good of all people.

Regarding this topic, Calvin, in both his first and final editions of the *Institutes*, distinguishes the third use of the Law as the particular manner in which the Holy Spirit dwells in believers through Christ. First, he discusses a volitional aspect of the Law; since the Law of God in the life of believers is 'written and engraved upon their hearts by the finger of God', their inner minds come to be willingly moved by being 'prompted by the Spirit', and therefore, they 'long to obey the Lord's will'.<sup>79</sup> Secondly, he mentions exhortation; through the Law's pedagogical method, God instructs believers and intends them to enjoy 'the profit by the law' of God as 'what is right and pleasing in the Lord's sight'.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Calvin's statement on the Spirit's gift giving according to the Trinitarian mode is placed between his discussions of the Law and the Ten Commandment in his first edition of the *Institutes*. Moreover, this topic is unfolded in relation to the common good of the church and the common good of humankind in his final edition of the *Institutes* (3.7.5 and 2.2.16). In Calvin's mind, since the Law is a gift for the proper mode of divine-human relationships and for human fellowship (Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, p.225.), it should be understood as a crucial way to use rightly the gift of the Spirit, which is given for the common good of the community.

<sup>79</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1. 33, p.49; c.f. 2.7.12. p.360.

<sup>80</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ibid; Ellen Charry stresses that Calvin's 'aretegenic interest' to pursue pedagogical purpose, is in contrast with 'the lack of edificatory effect', which is seen both in the scholastic philosophies focusing on the speculative intellect and in 'the modern systematic theological paradigm' attending to 'the rationality or coherence of ideas apart from their moral power'. As Charry notes, Calvin's aretegenic reading continues to focus on the moral transformation, which is activated within believers through their 'internalized understanding of divine goodness' according to his theological order of anthropological psychology, soteriology, and pedagogy. For Calvin, the most significant focus of believer's life is not assent or unformed faith, as argued by Aquinas, but faith with love and devotion, which can be produced only by double knowledge of God's free and boundless goodness and humanity's lack of goodness, 'which edifies, benefits, and profits us'. Charry's aretegenic reading of Calvin's theology is a proper way to sense both psychological and pastoral aspects of believer's volunteering reciprocity, which is an underlined theological premise of Calvin's thought on the common good, see *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.199-221.



However, in his final edition of the *Institutes*, it is notable that Calvin expands his discussion of the positive function of the third use of the Law to include an explanation of its punitive purpose, which he regards as a necessary response to human weakness. For Calvin, both the inner person, who shows voluntary obedience towards God, and the outer person, whose weakness hinders his conformity to God's Law, coexist in the same individual inspired by the Holy Spirit. There will now be an exploration of this dual – positive and punitive – understanding of the third use of the Law.

Calvin states the positive function of the third use of the Law using the language of servitude, earnestness, and learning:

So moved and quickened through the directing of the Spirit [*per Spiritus directionem*]...they long to obey God, they still profit by the law in two ways. Here is the best instrument [*optimum organum*] for them to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord's will to which they aspire. It is as if some servant, already prepared with all earnestness of heart [*toto animi studio*] to commend himself to his master, must search out and observe his master's ways more carefully in order to conform and accommodate himself to them.<sup>81</sup>

In Calvin's mind, believers in Christ receive the intellectual mutuality between humanity and God through the Law within their volitional and voluntary mutuality with the Spirit. This intellectual mutuality is dealt with in Calvin's account of the office of teaching (*doctrina*) in the third use of the Law; this office fulfils a pedagogical function for believers. Here, whilst the Spirit enables *volitional* communication between believers and God, the Law enables *intellectual* divine-human communication.<sup>82</sup> As Calvin illustrates, 'God regenerated the faithful by his Spirit, so that it [the new covenant] became not only a doctrine as the letter, but also efficacious, which not only strikes the ear, but penetrates into the heart, and really forms us for the service of God'.<sup>83</sup>

However, Calvin immediately recognizes that a more negative function of the third use of the Law is unavoidable due to human weakness: 'The law is to the flesh like a whip

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<sup>81</sup> 2.7.12. p.360; *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1. pp.33, 49.

<sup>82</sup> For Kendall, Calvin's doctrine of faith, as a form of knowledge, is closer to intellectualism, whilst Calvinists prefer voluntarism. On the other hand, Kendall's critics, such as Helm, argue that Calvin, like the Puritans, is closer to voluntarism, because he stresses both activity and passivity within the faith. See R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 1997), pp.19-20, 28; Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), pp.53-70.

<sup>83</sup> Comm. *Jeremiah* 31:31-32, p.127.

[*flagrum*] to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work. Even for a spiritual man not yet free of the weight of the flesh the law remains a constant sting [*assiduus aculeus*] that will not let him stand still'.<sup>84</sup> Here, the Law as 'whip' differs from the punitive or correctional functions attributed by Calvin to the first use of the Law. Calvin is careful to sandwich his discussion of the Law as a 'whip' between two discourses, which emphasise it as the office of 'exhortation'. As he states: 'because we need not only teaching [*doctrina*] but also exhortation [*exhortatione*], the servant of God will also avail himself of this benefit of the law: by frequent meditation upon it to be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression'.<sup>85</sup> For Calvin, this office of exhortation, along with that of teaching, constructs his understanding of the third use of the Law.<sup>86</sup> In addition, Calvin's understanding of the function of exhortation goes beyond the intellectual instruction of the Law; rather, it directs believers to volitional conformity. According to Calvin, the Law, for believers, has a positive function, represented in his language of 'moving', 'quickenings', 'daily instruction', and 'exhortation'. However, it also has an apparently negative function represented through the imagery of the 'whip' (*flagrum*) and 'constant sting' (*assiduous aculeus*).<sup>87</sup> Though this negative function controls whatever hinders the sanctification of self-denial, that is to say, the weakness of flesh in believers, one may argue that, for Calvin, it should in fact be positively regarded as an illustration of the quickening power of the Law.<sup>88</sup>

It will be helpful now to apply Calvin's sensitive classification of the two dimensions of the third use of the Law – positive and punitive – to the perspective of his theology of the common good. On the one hand, Calvin believes that the third use of the Law partially though consistently disciplines believers by whipping their disobedient minds 'to shake off their sluggishness' and 'to pinch them awake to their imperfection', when they seek their own private advantages such as greed or pride: 'as the design of the law is, to bring men to self-denial, and as it expressly condemns covetousness, we see that Christ had no

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<sup>84</sup> 2.7.12. p.361; OS 3:338.

<sup>85</sup> 2.7.12. pp.360-61; OS 3:338.

<sup>86</sup> This is related to pedagogy, which will be discussed later in the case study on Christian freedom in this chapter.

<sup>87</sup> 2.7.12. p.360.

<sup>88</sup> 2.7.12. pp.360-61; CO 2:261-262.

other object in view than to correct the false conviction of the young men'.<sup>89</sup> Calvin also cites the apostle Paul to make this point:

If they have any mixture of defects, if they are persecuted by any with hatred, if they are assailed by any revilings [*sic*] – that these things are not merely *rods* of the Heavenly Master, but *buffetings*, to fill them with shame, and beat down all forwardness...He [God] bids Paul be satisfied with his grace, and, in the mean time, not refuse chastisement.<sup>90</sup>

On the other hand, Calvin never let his emphasis remain only upon this rather negative image of the 'whip' when he discusses the use of the Law for believers. He also focuses his attention on the more positive outplaying of the third use of the Law in Christ; as he states:

[Paul's statements] show not what use the law serves for the regenerate, but what it can of itself confer upon man...the great usefulness of the law: the Lord instructs by their reading of it those whom he inwardly instills [*sic*] with a readiness to obey. He lay hold not only of the precepts, but the accompanying promise of grace, which alone sweetens [*dulcescat*] what is bitter [*amarum*].<sup>91</sup>

One can therefore suggest that, for Calvin, the third use of the Law in Christ permanently and wholly plays its role in stirring up the servant's mind in a positive manner in order to make it cheerful and voluntary. With regard to this, Hesselink's attention to 'sweetness' is helpful. Hesselink summarizes Calvin's teaching on God's Trinitarian work of providing sweetness for His children.<sup>92</sup> According to Calvin, David, even as a believer under the shadowy old covenant prior to the coming of Christ, 'was attracted with the sweetness of God's goodness...he [David] could receive joy and repose nowhere but in God'.<sup>93</sup> Likewise, in his Commentary on Psalms, Calvin assumes God's goodness as the source of sweetness that causes humanity's cheerful gratitude: 'As God has revealed his goodness in his word, his word is the source from which we must derive our assurance of his goodness...in which [the word] God, sweetly alluring men to himself promises that his grace will be ready and open for all'.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Comm. *Matthew*. 19:20, pp.396-97; Comm. *Mark*. 10:21, p.397. Calvin relates the third use of the Law to bearing of the cross in order to illustrate a pedagogical discipline for attaining self-denial through hunger and poverty (CO 45:539); see also *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1. 33, p.49.

<sup>90</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*. 12:7-9, pp.374-77.

<sup>91</sup> 2.7.12. p.361; CO 2:261-262; OS 3:338.

<sup>92</sup> Hesselink, "Calvin, Theologian of Sweetness", pp.318-332.

<sup>93</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 116:1, p.360; Hesselink, "Sweetness", p.324.

<sup>94</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 119:149, p.27, quoted in Hesselink, *Ibid.*, p.324.

Finally, in ‘the sweet fragrance of Christ’, this goodness of God is fully delivered to believers, quickening their soul, and they ‘are stirred up to desire him [Christ]’ by ‘the delectable sweetness of the gospel, and its power and efficacy for inspiring life’.<sup>95</sup> In addition, Calvin translates Paul’s statement, ‘we are the aroma of Christ’, as the ‘sweet savour [or smell] of Christ’ in order to draw attention to the believer’s faithful and upright life to deliver the gospel of Christ ‘with its delectable fragrance’. According to Calvin, since believers are allured by the goodness of God in the sweetness of Christ, they are also attracted to brotherly love: ‘He [Christ] proceeds further, in order to inflame us, by his [Christ’s] example, to love the brethren. Yet he joins both together...we should taste by faith how inestimably delightful his goodness is, and next he allures us, in this way, to cultivate brotherly love’.<sup>96</sup>

Consequently, Calvin suggests the idea of ‘the sweetness of the law’ in his understanding of the third use of the Law, commenting on Psalm 19:10: ‘The Psalmist now exalts the law of God both on account of its price and sweetness’.<sup>97</sup> For Calvin, when believers are united with Christ and are in loving fellowship with Him, they can and ought to use the Law differently, that is, not as a burden to be avoided but as a gift to be pursued. In other words, only when the Law is aimed at Christ<sup>98</sup> will it work as a friendly gift for believers, bringing out joyful responsibility in them to work for the common good. As he states: ‘if we separate the law from the hope of pardon, and from the Spirit of Christ, so far from tasting it to be sweet as honey, we will rather find in it a bitterness which kills our wretched souls’.<sup>99</sup>

Therefore, in Calvin’s view, the Law, through its third use, does not command believers through dry legalism to accept unwillingly what is bitter to them, but rather it encourages them to receive voluntarily what is sweet within the mutual love between humanity and God. The opportunity to exchange what is bitter with what is sweet is realized only in believers’ regeneration by the work of the Spirit. Only when the Law is

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<sup>95</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*. 2:14, p.158; Hesselink, *Ibid.*, p.321.

<sup>96</sup> Comm. *John*. 15:13, p.116; Hesselink, *Ibid.*, p.325.

<sup>97</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 19:10, p.323; Hesselink, *Ibid.*, p.325.

<sup>98</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 10:4, pp.384-85; CO 49:196. As Pattison states, ‘Christ is the primary focus of the law and every aspect of the law’s instruction, commands, and promises must be applied first to Christ’ (*Poverty*, p.222); see also Hesselink, “Christ, the Law, and the Christian”, in *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, pp.186-87.

<sup>99</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 19:10, pp.324-25.

received by the minds of believers through the promise of grace does it come to humanity, not as a burdensome obligation but as a precious and joyous gift, not as a forced command but as an inspired guide.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, one can conclude that, for Calvin, since the Law is rooted in Christ, it is able to contribute to believers' self-denial through its correctional discipline. By doing so, it may also contribute to believers' lives for the common good. In addition, the Law directs them to live their lives in a spirit of voluntary sharing and love through its positive and quickening manner; by doing so, it may also contribute to the building of the common good.

Lastly, for Calvin, one further dimension of the third use of the Law, which is noteworthy in relation to his theology of the common good, is the restraint the Law brings to human self-confidence. The third use of the Law, Calvin argues, is vital, 'lest we put our confidence in them [good works], lest we boast of them [good works], lest we credit our salvation to them [good works]'.<sup>101</sup> Here, Calvin appears to imply his criticism of the Roman Church's doctrine of good works for salvation used as the shared heritage of the church, a criticism that he gives voice to explicitly in the final edition of the *Institutes*, 3.5.3.<sup>102</sup> At the same time, one can suggest that Calvin understands *the third use of the Law* as a precious pastoral gift to believers, a tool for their humility and obedience. That is to say, the third use of the Law is used as the proper mode of relation within a community of faith, acting as a seedbed for believers' mutual sharing of the divine gifts for 'the common good of the church' and the benefit of all neighbours.<sup>103</sup>

#### **4.2.3.2. A Case Study: Christian Freedom and the Common Good**

Having considered in a previous chapter the relation between self-denial and the common good in Calvin's thought we turn, in this section, to Christian freedom in the context of the third use of the Law in Christ. In all his editions of the *Institutes*, Calvin divides Christian freedom, in relation to the Law, into three categories; pedagogical, voluntary responsive, and pastoral. These three categories will now be discussed,

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<sup>100</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 7:21, p.269; Calvin, *Ten Commandments*, p.46; CO 26:242-43.

<sup>101</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1. 33, p.49.

<sup>102</sup> CO 4:163.

<sup>103</sup> 3.7.5.

examining how Calvin understands the Law and Christian freedom in relation to the common good.

### **The pedagogical perspective**

Calvin emphasizes that the believer cannot obtain Christian freedom through compliance with the Law. He argues that believers should not seek justice by Law; rather, they should act beyond the Law, ‘forgetting all law-righteousness...since...the law leaves no one righteous, either we are excluded from all hope of justification or we ought to be freed from it’.<sup>104</sup> For Calvin, compliance cannot be a foundation for the development of Christian freedom. Thus believers should not trust in the Law for justification, but instead look to the mercy of God and Christ beyond the Law: ‘we should, when justification is being discussed, embrace God’s mercy alone, turn our attention from ourselves, and look only to Christ’.<sup>105</sup>

However, Calvin believes that the role of the Law is to inform believers about how they should live their lives, and to give them consistent advice and recommendations to perform good deeds. The Law has a pedagogical function in teaching, advising, and encouraging Christians to live a good life, ‘even though before God’s judgment seat it [the Law] has no place in their consciences’.<sup>106</sup> Calvin believes that the first meaning of Christian freedom demonstrates how the Law cannot lead to meritorious work for salvation; however, it does have an educational function for believers. In relation to the theme of ‘the common good’, one can say that Calvin understands the pedagogical function of the Law, as the first part of Christian freedom, as playing a positive role in guiding believers to contribute to the common good of the community.

### **The responsive perspective**

What, then, does Calvin say about the second, responsive, meaning of Christian freedom with regard to the believer’s good life? With their conscience freed from the yoke of fear based on the inevitability of the Law, Christians obtain freedom by grace, and become children of God. As God’s children, they can submit voluntarily to the will of

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<sup>104</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 6, p.241; 3.19.2.

<sup>105</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 6, p.242.

<sup>106</sup> 3.19.2. p.835.

their merciful Father. Calvin believes Christian freedom involves a voluntary observance of the Law, which moves beyond its inevitable requirements. As he states:

Consciences observe the law, not as if constrained by the necessity of the law [*legis necessitate*], but that freed from the law's yoke [*legis iugo*] willingly obey God's will. For since they dwell in perpetual dread so long as they remain under the sway of the law [*legis iugo*], they will never be eager and ready to obey God, unless they have already been given this sort of freedom [*huiusmodi libertate*].<sup>107</sup>

For Christians, therefore, the purpose of the Law and Christian freedom is essentially the same. Both encourage Christians to lead a good life: 'the purpose of the freedom is to encourage us to good'.<sup>108</sup> Christian freedom does not lie in its becoming the inevitable yoke of fear to believers; rather, it is used as a means of encouraging them to lead a good life and to give their gratitude to the merciful Father as His children. For this reason, one can say that the responsive voluntary function of the Law for the life of gratitude could contribute positively to the formation of the believer's good life for the community.

### **The pastoral perspective**

In addition to the pedagogical and responsive function, Calvin envisions a pastoral function of the Law as the third category of Christian freedom. He relates this category within the context of *adiaphora*, from the Greek ἀδιάφορα ('indifferent', or *indifferenter*).<sup>109</sup> He emphasizes the significance of recognizing freedom regarding external matters (*rerum externarum*) 'for if it [the knowledge of this freedom] is lacking, our consciences will have no repose and there will be no end to superstitions'.<sup>110</sup> In other words, it is necessary for believers to understand appropriately their Christian freedom if their right use of the gifts of God is to be found among *adiaphora*, that is indifferent things such as the unrestricted eating of meat and the wearing of vestments.<sup>111</sup> As he states:

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<sup>107</sup> *Inst.* 1536, pp.242-44; 3.19.4.

<sup>108</sup> *Inst.* 1536, p.244.

<sup>109</sup> See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: 'In Christian theology, the opinion that certain doctrines or practices in morals or religion are matters of indifference because they are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Bible'. In *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Volume 1*, ed. Philip W. Goetz (Chicago: The University of Chicago and Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1991), pp.98-99. This concept is to indicate things which were outside moral law in Stoic philosophy, and refers to matters unessential to faith and is allowed in the Christian church.

<sup>110</sup> 3.19.7. See also 3.19.9, p.841.

<sup>111</sup> 3.19.7.

These matters are more important than is commonly believed. For when consciences once ensnare themselves, they enter a long and inextricable maze [*longum et inextricabilem labyrinthum*], not easy to get out of. If a man begins to doubt whether he may use linen for sheets, shirts, handkerchiefs, and napkins, he will afterward be uncertain also about hemp: finally, doubt will even arise over tow. For he will turn over in his mind whether he can sup without napkins, or go without a handkerchief. If any man should consider daintier food unlawful, in the end he will not be at peace before God [*tranquillus coram Deo*], when he eats either black bread or common victuals, while it occurs to him that he could sustain his body on even coarser foods.<sup>112</sup>

What implications does this have, then, for Calvin's understanding of Christian freedom? One can suggest that it is related to his argument on the third function of Christian freedom. With regard to *adiaphora*, Calvin focuses on this characteristic as a divine gift 'as good things of God [*Dei bona*]' and sees in a positive light the believers' 'thanksgiving [*gratiarum*]' for this divine gift and their correct use of it by recognizing 'in his gifts the kindness and goodness of God [*Dei beneficentiam et bonitatem*]'.<sup>113</sup> Thus, one can suppose that this third implication of Christian freedom involves the public characteristics of believers' lives when they correctly use God's gifts.<sup>114</sup>

However, in contrast, a misunderstanding of Christian freedom can lead to an abuse and misuse of the divine gifts.<sup>115</sup> The third meaning of Christian freedom commands Christians to use this freedom only in the context of careful concern for weaker brethren. Only by doing so is the right use of divine gifts possible in the believer's life. Thus, Christian freedom cannot be used correctly when it is moved by the two extremes of overindulgent self-confidence or excessive fear of God.<sup>116</sup>

When considering this sense of moderation in the third category, it is important to remember that, for Calvin, God's gifts provide humans not only with practical value, such as usefulness, but also with an appreciation of aesthetic value, as discussed earlier.<sup>117</sup> In a similar vein, Hass notes that the third use of Christian freedom in 'things indifferent' enables believers 'to make use of the gifts of God for (both) their enjoyment and

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> 3.19.8. p.840; *Inst.* 1536, p.245; OS 4:287-8.

<sup>114</sup> 3.7.5.

<sup>115</sup> 3.19.9, pp.840-1; OS 4:288; *Inst.* 1536, p.246.

<sup>116</sup> 3.19.9, pp.840-1; OS 4:288; *Inst.* 1536, p.246.

<sup>117</sup> See section 3.7. of chapter 3.



edification' whilst keeping away from any selfish indulgence and luxury.<sup>118</sup> Calvin is opposed to excessive strictness but at the same time warns those who replace freedom with licentiousness, stating that:

Surely ivory and gold and riches are good creations of God [*bonae Dei creaturae*], permitted, indeed appointed, for men's use by God's providence. And we have never been forbidden to laugh, or to be filled, or to join new possession to old or ancestral one, or to delight in musical harmony, or to drink wine. True indeed. But where there is plenty, to wallow in delights, to gorge oneself, to intoxicate mind and heart with present pleasures and be always panting after new ones – such are very far removed from a lawful use of God's gifts [*legitimo donorum Dei usu*].<sup>119</sup>

Thus, Calvin believes that Christian freedom is realized in learning to satisfy one's own self with what one has already received:

It is a true saying that under coarse and rude attire there often dwells a heart of purple, while sometimes under silk and purple is hid a simple humility. Thus let every man live in his station, whether slenderly, or moderately, or plentifully, so that all may remember God nourishes them to live [*ut vivant*], not to luxuriate.<sup>120</sup>

This is the Law of freedom. Moreover, using the case of licentiousness caused by 'uncontrolled desire', 'immoderate prodigality' and 'vanity and arrogance'<sup>121</sup> as an example, Calvin also argues that believers' wrong use of freedom causes them to lead a self-centred life; one focussed only on private advantage such as 'delight in lavish and ostentatious banquets, bodily apparel, and domestic architecture' and the desire to outstrip their neighbours, all of which are 'defended under the pretext of Christian freedom [*sub christianae libertatis praetextu defenduntur*]'.<sup>122</sup>

In this case, internal freedom is related to the first and second category of Christian freedom – pedagogical and responsive – and must be considered mutually with the external freedom related to the third, pastoral, category of Christian freedom. This external freedom belongs to temporal life on earth more than to the inner life, and thus is related to indifferent activities (*adiaphora*), which are neither good nor evil in themselves. However, one can say that Calvin's stance here is not completely neutral, since he implies that there is a broader ethical demand upon human behaviour. Though *adiaphora* should not be

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<sup>118</sup> Haas, "Calvin's Ethics", p.103; 3.10.2. p.720.

<sup>119</sup> 3.19.9; OS 4:289.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

pursued for one's own private advantage or with disregard for one's neighbours and the public good, Calvin suggests that one can enjoy these indifferent things in Christian freedom as long as one does not ignore the public good and as long as there is no extravagance or pride.<sup>123</sup>

Thus one can suggest that, for Calvin, Christian freedom in *adiaphora* is related more to the inner will than to any outward activity. He argues that for 'this ability of which we are speaking we must consider within man and not measure it by outward success'.<sup>124</sup> In other words, the rule of Christian freedom is to use God's gift with a pure conscience.<sup>125</sup> Calvin recognizes that both physical poverty and material prosperity (since these are neither harmful nor beneficial in themselves) as instruments for obeying the will of God, can be used to achieve Christian freedom in all believers' lives. For Calvin, one of the clear demands of God is 'the common good of the church';<sup>126</sup> thus, one can argue that, within his writings, he suggests that the third, pastoral, implication of Christian freedom lies in believers' public faith to live a good life with a pure conscience, using the gifts of God correctly for the edification (*aedificatione*) and the common good (*commune bonum*) of all neighbours. In relation to this, Stevenson points out that the various dimensions of Christian freedom are woven together by the notion of God's sovereign grace, and, therefore, for Calvin, the term *aedificatio*, embodied by his teaching on the Christian freedom, is 'a multidimensional process' such as 'to grow spiritually, psychically, and physically'.<sup>127</sup>

It is interesting to note Calvin's intention to focus more upon the relationship between Christian freedom and weaker members of the Christian community, though he believes all humanity must be in the care of the church.<sup>128</sup> For Calvin, Christian freedom has a clear purpose and limitation, that is, love of one's neighbours. Therefore, the primary

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 6, p.247; 3.19.9.

<sup>124</sup> 2.4.8. p.316.

<sup>125</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 6, p.247.

<sup>126</sup> 3.7.5.

<sup>127</sup> William Stevenson., *Sovereign Grace: The Place and Significance of Christian Freedom in John Calvin's Political Thought*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.4, 74-75.

<sup>128</sup> In his *Institutes* 3.19.15, Calvin briefly comments on the idea of the two kingdoms – church and state – in terms of Christian freedom. This freedom to use correctly God's gifts for one's neighbours is understood and applied not only in the spiritual kingdom for eternal life but also in

criterion of Christian freedom is believers' care and consideration towards their weaker brethren.<sup>129</sup> This is a crucial part of believers' edification of their brethren, namely, their work in support of the common good of the church. As he says:

Even if men...abstain from meat throughout life, and...wear clothes of one colour, they are not less free. Indeed, because they are free, they abstain with a free conscience [*libera conscientia*]. But in having no regard for their brothers' weakness they slip most disastrously, for we ought so to bear with it that we do not heedlessly allow what would do them the slightest harm.<sup>130</sup>

Thus Calvin views the indiscriminate use of Christian freedom as harmful to the common good of the church. In his mind, benefits given to one's neighbours must not be given in a way that compromises right faith in God. As he declares, 'for our neighbour's sake we may not offend God'.<sup>131</sup> For example, Calvin argues strongly that the papal Mass cannot be the right exercise of Christian 'freedom' as a means of 'the edification of our neighbours'; rather, it leads them into evil.<sup>132</sup> Hence, according to Calvin, the papal Mass as 'sacrifice' is not 'milk' for weaker Church members but rather a 'poison' to them.<sup>133</sup> In addition, Calvin's standard of whether a Christian action is 'milk' or 'poison' is dependent upon the following tenet: 'our freedom must be subordinated to love [*caritati*]...under purity of faith [*fidei puritate*]'.<sup>134</sup> Thus, Calvin asserts that Christian freedom encompasses a communal deliberation for the profit of weaker members when it is used *correctly* with believers' humility, care, and moderation. Accordingly, being a Christian does not only entail the promotion of active and positive factors to benefit one's neighbours, it also includes the blocking out of negative factors that are harmful to the welfare of these neighbours.

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the political kingdom for the earthly social order. This social dimension to Calvin's theology of the Christian freedom will be discussed in chapter 6.

<sup>129</sup> 3.19.10; *Inst.* 1536, p.248. Regarding this main criterion of Christian freedom, Biéler notes that Christian freedom 'cannot be measured only in terms of personal and subjective considerations'. He argues 'the needs of others' must be 'the touchstone for the whole of Christian ethics' clearly emphasizing 'the individual's rule and standard is not only his personal valuation, nor his individual ethic, nor his needs or feelings, but those of his neighbour, brother or sister, the other member of his own body' (*Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.190).

<sup>130</sup> 3.19.10; OS 4:289-290; *Inst.* 1536, p.248.

<sup>131</sup> 3.19.13. p.845.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> See 3.19.13. pp.845-6; OS 4:292-3.

<sup>134</sup> 3.19.13. p.845.

For Calvin, caring for the weak, as commanded by Christ, should become the purpose of Christian freedom: ‘nothing is plainer than this rule: that we should use our freedom if it results in the edification of our neighbours, but if it does not help our neighbour, then we should forego it’.<sup>135</sup> Hence, Calvin stresses that Christian freedom is the communal ethic required in pursuance of communal benefits, particularly the consideration of the underprivileged, rather than for individual pleasure. Consequently, one may suggest that all three characteristics of Christian freedom – pedagogical, responsive, and pastoral – are related to believers’ public faith in terms of Calvin’s theology of the common good. In particular, Calvin seems to understand the third attribute of Christian freedom as its ultimate and communal purpose. For him, human selfishness leads humanity to a self-centred freedom. Calvin avers that believers cannot possess ‘the liberty to hurt our neighbours’ but should instead possess the liberty not to harm or injure anyone. In other words, only freedom that serves others brings ‘true liberty’ and thus any freedom that brings hurt, harm, and injury to others is ‘no liberty’.<sup>136</sup> As he teaches: ‘for as we ought to be the servants of God, that we may enjoy this benefit, so moderation is required in the use of it. In this way, indeed, our consciences become free; but this prevents us not to serve God, who requires us also to be subject to men’.<sup>137</sup>

Furthermore, Calvin divides believers’ offences against their neighbours into two groups; the weaker members and the Pharisees. One is ‘the offense given by someone’s fault’ (*scandalum aliud datum*) and another is ‘the offence received’ (*scandalum aliud acceptum*) without fault. The ‘offence given’ impacts primarily upon weaker members of the community and is caused by activities of the giver, such as ‘unseemly levity, or wantonness, or rashness, out of its proper order or place’ amongst believers.<sup>138</sup> Thus, ‘the offence given’ (*scandalum aliud datum*), as it is committed against weaker members, could be interpreted as opposed to the common good. Calvin believes that any attempt to rectify an ‘offence given’ is a positive action, which could ultimately contribute to the common good. However, ‘the offence received’ (*scandalum acceptum*) is the result of the believer’s activity being wrongly interpreted ‘by others’ ill will or malicious intent of

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<sup>135</sup> 3.19.12. pp.844-5; OS 4:292.

<sup>136</sup> Canlis stresses that ‘truly human freedom is held out to us not as individuals but as ones who discover our identities the more we live in another: *en Christo* and, correspondingly, in others’ (*Calvin’s Ladder*, p.248).

<sup>137</sup> Comm. 1 Peter. 2:16, pp.84-5.

mind'.<sup>139</sup> Thus according to Calvin, any attempts to put right 'the offense received' may be irrelevant to 'the good and edification of our brethren' (*in proximi nostri bonum et aedificatione*).<sup>140</sup> In addition, he judges that Christian freedom cannot be justified only by believers' outward actions; rather it can only be justified when Christian freedom is internally motivated towards the edification of their neighbours.<sup>141</sup>

To summarise: for Calvin, Christian freedom is not restricted to internal or spiritual freedom, although such internal freedom is more important than external freedom. Those who have spiritual freedom should use it to lead a responsible life, both individually and communally. In particular, regarding the issue of *adiaphora*, Calvin established the rule of freedom based on the communal ethics of the church. In addition, regarding the issue of both given and received offences, he built up the notion of freedom for the edification of one's neighbours. Thus, one can see that for Calvin, Christian freedom is mainly understood as the grounds for the common good. Christian freedom is freedom which creates community and, with that, true freedom is finally reached.

In conclusion, given the above discussion of the Law in Christ and its relation to Christian freedom, how then does Calvin unfold and develop his understanding of the third use of the Law within his theology of the common good? In the next section, there will be an attempt to answer this question, considering how Calvin understood all three functions of the Law as implements for the common good. This will be explored particularly in relation to his exposition of the Ten Commandments.

### **4.3. The Ten Commandments for the common good**

#### **4.3.1. The background to Calvin's communal perspective on the Decalogue**

How can Calvin's notion of the use of the Law for the common good at both the divine and moral level be re-illuminated through his thoughts on the Ten Commandments? First, one can suggest that, from the dynamic perspective of the common good from social

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<sup>138</sup> 3.19.11. pp.842-3; OS 4:290.

<sup>139</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 6, pp.248-9; 3.19.11; OS 4:291.

<sup>140</sup> 3.19.12. pp.844-5; OS 4:291-292.

<sup>141</sup> Regarding this, Biéler notes that believers' 'inward attachment to the actual work of Jesus Christ', not their apparent 'conformity to an external rule', is to be regarded as 'the final criterion for Christian morality' (*Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.187).

to divine level, Calvin understands the Decalogue as the embodiment of the moral law, which is re-designed for the community of God's people: 'the Commandments are seen as a specially accommodated restatement of the law of nature for the chosen people'.<sup>142</sup> According to Calvin, this natural law, illustrated by the images of the 'seeds' of 'laws', 'equity', and 'political order' or 'the light of reason', has been implanted in all humanity at creation, and remained even after the Fall. Thus, its universal and 'unvarying consent of all nations and of individual mortals with regard to laws' functions as the common ground, not only for the Decalogue of God's people, but also for general ethics in all nations.<sup>143</sup> In addition, Calvin argues, the character of the moral law comes into light through natural justice and the standard of love, given to all people by God for the common good.<sup>144</sup> These features are rooted within the human 'conscience' and function as an 'inward law' engraved in the hearts of all people.<sup>145</sup> With this in mind, Calvin defines the Decalogue in his preface to the sermon on the Ten Commandments as follows:

The moral law...is contained under two heads, one of which simply commands us to worship God with pure faith and piety; the other, to embrace men with sincere affection. Accordingly, it is the true and eternal rule of righteousness, prescribed *for men of all nations and times*...it is his eternal and unchangeable will that he himself indeed be worshiped *by us all*, and that we love one another.<sup>146</sup>

Thus, for Calvin, this moral law as evidence of the natural law contained in the Decalogue is important in the pursuit of the common good. Nevertheless, one should turn attention to what was for Calvin the more important third use of the Law, which he believed was intrinsic to the Decalogue, a moral space created by the inter-relation between the second and third use of the Law. It is important to recall that Calvin regards the Decalogue as the outcome of God's accommodation; through it, God humbly abases himself and comes down to His children's 'capacity' like 'a nurse' for their common benefit.<sup>147</sup> First, as Schreiner notes, for Calvin, 'the commandments are seen as the divine formation of natural law'.<sup>148</sup> However, Schreiner also points out that, in Calvin's mind, regardless of the damaged but surviving law of nature, human reason can no longer

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<sup>142</sup> 2.8.1, See note 5, p.368; Comm. *Harmony Four Books of Moses "Praefatio in legem"*; CO 24:209-260.

<sup>143</sup> 2.2.13. pp.272-73; OS 3:257.

<sup>144</sup> 2.7.3-4; 2.8.1-2; 3.19.15-16; 4.10.3; 4.20.11; 4.20.15.

<sup>145</sup> 2.8.1. pp.367-68.

<sup>146</sup> 4.20.15. p.1503; OS 5:487, [italics added].

<sup>147</sup> Calvin, Sermon Thirteen (Tuesday, July 16, 1555), Deut. 5:22 (3), p.242.

understand the Decalogue as it could before the Fall; this phenomenon is ‘particularly evident’ in the first tablet and ‘only partial and incomplete’ in the second tablet.<sup>149</sup> Thus, according to Schreiner, in the Decalogue, Calvin’s ‘main concern was not to formulate a theory of natural law but to use the idea of natural law as a way to explain the continuation of society after the devastating effects of the Fall’.<sup>150</sup>

With this in mind, one should consider Calvin’s declaration that the Law, along with the later gospel, is revealed as ‘the knowledge of God the redeemer in Christ’, as shown in his title of book 2 of the *Institutes* (1559). He also declares in 2.7. that the given purpose of the three functions of the Law is to foster the hope of salvation to believers. Thus, Calvin’s statement in 2.8. on the Decalogue ought to be understood within the larger framework of the ministry of Christ the saviour. Of course, in 2.8.1, one can see that the Decalogue is a clear manifestation of the natural law and conscience, that is, the ‘inward law...as written, even engraved, upon the hearts of all’. However, in 2.8.6-10, Calvin stresses that the moral law should be spiritually and, thus fully, appreciated in light of the purpose of God, the Lawgiver, rather than in light of the natural law.<sup>151</sup> In conjunction with this, Calvin, in book 2.8.7. and following, focuses on Christ who restores the right understanding of the Law from the perspective of God’s promise of grace. Upon this premise, one can see that, throughout 2.8.11-57, Calvin’s main concern regarding the two tablets is not discussed from the perspective of the natural law but from the perspective of the third use of grace to be engrafted in Christ by the Spirit.<sup>152</sup> This re-establishes the twofold right relation with God and neighbours as the foundation of the life for the common good.

In relation to this, as Hesselink notes, Calvin attempts to express God’s rule and order in his concept of the Law.<sup>153</sup> Hesselink recognizes that ‘for Calvin the content of the

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<sup>148</sup> Schreiner, *Theater*, p.78.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p.79.

<sup>151</sup> Peter Wyatt stresses that Calvin’s concept of the natural law does not imply independence from ‘divine direction’ and ‘the order of God’s electing purpose in Jesus Christ’, but depends wholly on God’s will and decree. Peter Wyatt, *Jesus Christ and Creation in the Theology of John Calvin*, (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1996), pp.125-27, 149.

<sup>152</sup> 2.8.57.

<sup>153</sup> Hesselink, *Calvin’s Concept of the Law*, pp.247-49.

moral law is essentially the same as that inscribed on the hearts of humans “by nature”<sup>154</sup>. However, as Hesselink also notes, ‘in the Decalogue the moral law is radically reoriented and thus put in an entirely new perspective...As the law of the covenant, the response which it calls for is sincere worship and grateful service, and a love which is a spontaneous response to the redemptive love of God’.<sup>155</sup> Likewise, with reference to both Christ as ‘the end of the law (Romans 10:4)’ and the Spirit who ‘gives life to the letter (II Corinthians 3:6ff)’, Hesselink reinterprets the Decalogue as the means for the complete restoration of the original order in creation.<sup>156</sup> Thus, whilst Calvin mentions the sense of equity enabled by the natural law in his statement on the second tablet, this is essentially peripheral.<sup>157</sup> For Calvin, the primary source of this equity is the third use of the Law. This implies that, believers, with their restored notion of the original status of equity based on their union with Christ, can fully participate in the pursuit of the common good. In contrast, unbelievers, with their dim notion of the damaged but surviving status of equity based on the natural law, can only partly participate in the pursuit of the common good. This means that, even for pagans outside Christ, the second tablet can still be partially applied for the promotion of their social and physical welfare.

However, in Calvin’s understanding of the Ten Commandments, where he pursues social welfare through spiritual welfare, the third use of the Law in Christ is central while the second use based upon the natural law is peripheral; in this way, both may co-exist. In this context, Wendel points out that state and church, both ‘issuing from the divine will’, inspire ‘the respect for the two tables of the Law’ ‘each in its own manner’.<sup>158</sup> Thus, for Calvin, the divine-human relationship commanded in the first tablet restores the original and proper mutuality amongst humanity through believers’ participation in God; this lies at the moral centre of the Decalogue, and in doing so, aims towards communal solidarity in Christ.<sup>159</sup> He therefore considers the two tablets through the Trinitarian mode<sup>160</sup> of the

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Duncan Forrester stresses that ‘Protestants...in their thinking about social justice have a continuing ambivalence about the role of reason, in particular about natural law forms of thinking, “Social justice and welfare”, *the Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Robin Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.196.

<sup>158</sup> François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philips Mairet (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), p.79.

<sup>159</sup> 2.8.11-12. p.377.



third use of the Law, but does not exclude the natural law and the second use of the Law in the context of the Decalogue. This mode will now be examined in more detail.

For Calvin, the ‘fatherly gentleness’ of God is the reason why believers, ‘freed from this severe requirement of the law’,<sup>161</sup> respond to Him with ‘cheerfulness and eagerness’; as they come to know God ‘as He truly is’ they ‘accommodate’ themselves to Him,<sup>162</sup> and in doing so, a proper relationship of mutual love between God the Father and His children may be formed. Thus, for Calvin, the key characteristics of the life of believers as God’s children are gratitude and obedience.<sup>163</sup> Furthermore, believers should humble themselves before God and avoid self-pride; for, the Law and the Commandments are given to humanity by God as the gifts of accommodation, that is, God’s self-descending and giving of ‘His goodness and grace’ to humanity for His children’s spiritual ‘salvation’ and physical ‘well-being’ in the mode of the covenant.<sup>164</sup>

Moreover, Calvin argues that Christ, as mediator, is the revealer as well as the substance of the Law. Foremost, Christ, as the cardinal ‘pattern’ of Calvin’s doctrine of Christian life, is the model of the Law.<sup>165</sup> In addition, Christ, the provider of the gospel, utilizes the ministry of mediation as the perfection of the Law by giving ‘substance [*corpus*] to the shadows [*umbris*]’.<sup>166</sup> Thus, for Calvin, the Law works not only as a rule of living (*regula Vivendi*) designed for the ministry of justification but also as a rule of life-giving (*regula vivificandi*) designed for the ministry of sanctification by Christ, the end of the Law.<sup>167</sup> Therefore, in Calvin’s system, both believers’ obligatory actions and their voluntary commitment may operate together with a sense of balance, without cancelling each other out, in their mode of life for the common good. Through this double system, Calvin recognizes and emphasizes the third use of the Law as a gift provided to believers in Christ. In other words, Christ, as the substance of God’s accommodation, represented in

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<sup>160</sup> This Trinitarian mode in the third use of the Law is also discussed in the previous chapter with relation to Calvin’s notion of sanctification for the common good.

<sup>161</sup> 3.19.5. p.837.

<sup>162</sup> Calvin, *Ten Commandments*, p.77; CO 26:267.

<sup>163</sup> Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, pp.19-20.

<sup>164</sup> Calvin, *Ten Commandments*, pp.45-46; CO 26:242.

<sup>165</sup> 3.6.3. p.686; Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp.112-22; Leith, *Christian Life*, pp.45-60, Hesselink, *Calvin’s Concept of the Law*, pp.278-286.

<sup>166</sup> 2.9.4. p.427; OS 3:401. As Billings states, ‘Christ is not simply an example of the law or its definitive interpreter. Christ is the substance of the law’ (“Participation”, p.207).

Calvin's parallel language of Law and gospel, is the standard and power for the believer's communal life.<sup>168</sup>

Therefore, once again, it should be noted that the third use of the Law is dominant in Calvin's sermon on the Decalogue. Farley highlights that Calvin's understanding of this third use 'constitutes the critical foundation for all sixteen sermons', and this demonstrates his belief that the Ten Commandments form God's overarching plan for believers' daily lives.<sup>169</sup> However, the fact that Calvin's sermon on the Decalogue focuses on this third use should not be understood as implying that the second use is excluded, because the inter-relation between the law of the Spirit and the natural law is implicated in Calvin's thinking of the second tablet. Thereupon, it can be argued that there is a clear inter-relation between the second and third use of the Law in Calvin's understanding of the communal law represented in the Commandments, as in the case of the mutual support between state and church for both the spiritual and social common good.<sup>170</sup> Thus, in Calvin's thinking, the Decalogue is a moral place where the inter-relation between the second and third use for the common good is displayed.<sup>171</sup>

However, we need to keep in mind that Calvin clearly compares the failure of human knowledge regarding the first table to the failure of human knowledge, especially in critical or difficult situations, regarding the second table. Whilst he notes the total

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<sup>167</sup> Calvin, *Ten Commandments*, p.25; Moon, *Christ the Mediator*, pp.82-83, 231-32, 238-240, 243-45.

<sup>168</sup> Calvin, *Ten Commandments*, pp.45-46; CO 26:242-43; Billings, "Participation", p.208.

<sup>169</sup> Calvin, *Sermon Five* (Thursday, June 20, 1555), p.26.

<sup>170</sup> This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

<sup>171</sup> It is notable that, considering this inter-relation, Calvin adapts the Stoic concept of *prolepsis* to his Christian understanding of the moral law in human conscience. Calvin stresses that, although all pagans do not receive the Mosaic law as a 'written law', God has implanted in all humanity the common 'knowledge of the law by nature' regarding 'what is right and just' – towards which the Mosaic law aims – through their mode of general law for civil society, see Comm. *Romans*. 2:14-15, pp.96-98; 4.20.16. pp.1504-5; Josef Bohatec, *Calvin Lehre von Staat und Kirche*, (Breslau: Marcus, 1937), pp.3-7. Regarding this, Backus stresses that 'these notions mean that even nations that do not have the law of God can and do participate in divine legislation and demonstrate this by their system of civil legislation', "Natural and Roman Law", p.11, in this context, for Calvin, the universality of the social common good can be rightly understood when one focuses upon the characteristics of the natural law that are implied in the Mosaic law, without misunderstanding it as a judicial law 'to be proclaimed among all nation and to be in force everywhere', 4.20.16, p.1505, See note 36 (p.1502). Moreover, according to Parker, Melancton and Bullinger assume that obeying the natural law serves a role in the salvation of virtuous pagans. However, Calvin does not admit any positive role for natural law in the salvation of pagans, T.H.L.Parker, *Commentaries on Romans 1532-42*, (Edinburgh: T&T. Clark, 1986), pp.137-41 (refers to 2.2.22. p.282).

blindness and impuissance of human reason in obeying the principal points of God's command in the first table, he admits that humanity has 'somewhat more understanding of the precepts of the Second Table [Ex. 20:12ff] because these are more closely concerned with the preservation of civil society among them [*civilis inter hominess societatis conservationem*]'.<sup>172</sup> This means that the value of the common good, drawn from the life of mutual participation innate within the second table, is realized not only by the third use of the Law for believers, but can also be known and declared through human knowledge of natural law; that is, the conscience of 'the same God-given natural law'<sup>173</sup> that both believer and unbeliever have. Consequently, for Calvin, the second table works for believers through the third and second use of the Law. On the other hand, unbelievers contribute to the common good only through their partial participation in this second table using the second use.

Having considered the two tablets as separate entities through the Trinitarian mode, it is important to note that, for Calvin, it is the Spirit who finally restores the divinely intended unity between them.<sup>174</sup> Thus, these tablets are distinctive but inseparable to believers united with Christ in the Spirit. For Christ, in the Spirit, becomes the foundation for believers' fellowship with God and others, and, through the Spirit, believers receive empowerment for fellowship with God and with others.

So far, it has been confirmed that, when one views Calvin's understanding of the Decalogue from the perspective of his notion of the common good at both divine and moral level, one can articulate the following three points: 1) the first table cherishes believers' love towards God, the original provider of the common good mainly by focusing on its religious foundations; 2) the second table cherishes believers' love in Christ towards neighbours within and without the church by representing both spiritual and moral levels;<sup>175</sup> 3) this second table also includes universal love towards all humankind, in which the image of God is contained, mainly by delineating social and moral levels (along with their divine origin).<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> 2.2.24. pp.283-84.

<sup>173</sup> Backus, "Natural and Roman Law", p.14.

<sup>174</sup> Billings, "Participation", p.203.

<sup>175</sup> Comm. 1 *Corinthians*. 10:16; CO 49:454; 4.17.38.

<sup>176</sup> 2.8.55.

How, then, does Calvin make use of this principle of communal value in the Law, including divine and moral levels, as the consistent standard by which one may determine the various aspects of the common good contained in each stipulation of the Decalogue? The following sections aim to provide a helpful case study to demonstrate how Calvin sets the believer's life for the common good as the leading topic in each stipulation of the Decalogue, which serves actively to constitute the double solidarity both between God and humanity and amongst humanity.

#### 4.3.2. The first tablet

In his first edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin clearly articulates that believers' love of God ought to be based upon their recognition of the goodness and virtue of Him in their lives.<sup>177</sup> Thus, Calvin suggests that God's Ten Commandments are identified as a sweet and gracious gift, which has been given to believers for their self-motivation to enjoy 'a mutual correspondence' (*relatio mutual*) with God, as in the case of the 'sweetness' (*suavitate, dulcedine*) in the third use of the Law mentioned above.<sup>178</sup>

In light of this, one ought to consider how Calvin describes the characteristic feature of communal ethics in the commandment to love God. This shall be done by looking in detail at his careful emphasis on two particular stipulations: the public benefit of oath-making and observance of the Sabbath.

As the oath-making represented in the third commandment is an activity related to the fear of God and is done in His holy name, Calvin argues that this cannot be performed 'out of private greed' [*privata cupiditate*]. Instead, it can only be used in response to public demands or to promote communal values, such as 'God's glory', 'the need of the brethren', 'the dignity of the gospel', and 'the public good' (*publico bono*).<sup>179</sup> Therefore, in Calvin's mind, a 'public oath' is not opposed to the love of God; rather, it can be

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<sup>177</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1. 9, p.26.

<sup>178</sup> 2.8.13-14. pp.379-80; OS 3:355; 2.8.15-16, pp.380-83.

<sup>179</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1.12, pp.29-30; OS 1:45-46; CO 27:578, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*. 19:16-21, 'when we offer evidence in court, we are performing a sacred act, so we should be very careful, fearful...Perjury brings with it sacrilege...God did not want a false witness to be spared. It is true that He is concerned for the wrong and the injustice that the witness wanted to commit against the innocent party, but God also wanted there to be a real respect for the order that He instituted for the common good of all mankind [*il a voulu qu'il eust reverence quant a cest ordre qu'il a institue pour le bien commun de tous homes*]' . [My translation.]

recognized as an activity that respects His holy name. Accordingly, for Calvin, any oath, even a private oath, can be recognized as an edifying force amongst brethren if it is carried out ‘with holy intent’ coinciding with ‘a duty of love’ (*charitatis officio*), ‘to further a brother’s edification’ (*promovenda fratris aedificatio*).<sup>180</sup> Thus, Calvin appears to recognize three categories in which oaths may be allowed: first, a public oath for the political or civil public good; second, an evangelistic or confessional oath for the common good of the church; and third, a private oath serving a public value such as love of neighbours. In addition, in his final edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin also includes a secular perspective, stating that ancient heathens respected ‘public and solemn oath-taking’, whilst rejecting ‘the common oaths’ which were ‘indiscriminately sworn’.<sup>181</sup> He therefore appears to recognize such classical public oath taking as an acceptable activity carried out for the common good of humankind through its common grace by natural law.

Moving on now to his interpretation of the fourth commandment, it is interesting to note that Calvin once more focuses upon public value within the command to keep the Sabbath.<sup>182</sup> Whilst excluding any discussion regarding the superstitious mystery surrounding the appointment and observance of the Sabbath, Calvin focuses instead upon its value as ‘a set and appointed day’ for communal assembly,<sup>183</sup> stating:

It is not by religion that we distinguish one day from another, but for the sake of the common polity [*communis politiae causa*], for we have certain prescribed days not simply to celebrate, as if by our stopping labour God is honoured and pleased, but because it is needful for the church to meet together on a certain day. [I Cor. 14:40].<sup>184</sup>

For Calvin, the principal purpose of community assembly on the Sabbath is ‘the hearing of the Word’, ‘the breaking of the mystical bread’, and ‘public prayers’ for ‘the peace of the Christian fellowship’: this is required in order ‘to maintain decorum, order, and peace in the church’.<sup>185</sup> Thus, the Sabbath is a space for mutual fellowship enabling believers to

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<sup>180</sup> 2.8.27. pp.393-94; OS 3:369-370.

<sup>181</sup> 2.8.27. p.393.

<sup>182</sup> Richard Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, (Bristol: Mentor, 1998), pp.52-60, 84,101-3,142.

<sup>183</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch.1.13-14, pp.30-32.

<sup>184</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch.1.14, p.32; OS 1:48.

<sup>185</sup> 2.8.32-34. pp.398-99.

recognize their unity as children of God through their ‘public confession of our faith’, ‘public invocation of the name of God’, and ‘the common sacraments’.<sup>186</sup>

In this same sermon, Calvin discusses justification, the first gift of the union with Christ, in relation to the ‘right’ of humanity to enjoy the Sabbath: ‘It isn’t done through our [own] industry, but we have acquired this right through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us in order to blot out our sins that they might no longer be imputed against us.’<sup>187</sup> He then continues by discussing sanctification, the second gift given through the Sabbath, stating that, ‘they had the Sabbath day as a testimony that grace had been given to us to mortify all our thoughts and affections in order that God might live in us by means of his Holy Spirit’.<sup>188</sup> For Calvin, the Sabbath serves as a sign of God’s sanctification, restoring the primal relation between humanity and God, and is commonly provided only for the common good of believers through the sacrament: ‘God says: “I gave you the Sabbath day as a sign that I sanctify you, that I am your God who reigns in your midst; that is something which is not common to all mortal men.”’.<sup>189</sup> In addition, for Calvin, the most significant function of the Sabbath commandment is the promotion of self-denial for Christian life. As he says: ‘we have been commanded to restrain ourselves [*de metre peine-s’efforcer de*] with all our power that our thoughts, affections, and desires might be subdued and that God might reign in us and govern us by his Holy Spirit’.<sup>190</sup> So the Sabbath commandment bids believers, through self-denial, to participate in a life of justification, which is composed of the death and resurrection of Christ, and of sanctification, which comprises the mortification of the flesh and the vivification of the soul. This commandment of the Sabbath enables humanity to realize their humility through self-denial – ‘all of this [spiritual rest] provides us [humanity] with an opportunity for our humiliation’<sup>191</sup> – and is the spiritual gift that provides a catalyst for an obedient life through the Spirit of God. Thus for Calvin, those who lead a disobedient life by not observing the Sabbath are immersed in their own life as slaves to their own advantage; on

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<sup>186</sup> Calvin, Sermon Five (Thursday, June 20, 1555), Deut. 5:12-14(3), pp.111-12.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p.99.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., pp.99, 100-102.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p.119.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p.103.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p.107.

the other hand, for obedient believers, ‘it seems to them that in serving God they will not be able to do so to their advantage’.<sup>192</sup>

The Sabbath commandment is a significant example of the third use of the Law as providing right guidance for believers; its observance becomes a decisive resource in aiding believers to participate in a life that works for the public good; that is, for the advantage of neighbours through the spirituality of self-denial. Thus, for Calvin, the ‘spiritual observance’ of the Sabbath enables believers ‘to meditate throughout life upon an everlasting Sabbath rest from all our works’, and also allows them to meditate piously upon ‘the work of the Spirit’ or ‘God’s works’. In doing so, this places believers within the spiritual and moral space of the third use of the Law.<sup>193</sup> For Calvin, the Sabbath commandment gives believers a new mode of life, which calls upon them to give up ‘whatever seems good to us and what our nature craves’, and to choose instead to ‘adhere to and be joined to their God’, who is ‘the highest good of men’, through their ‘true union and sanctification with God’.<sup>194</sup> Thus, ‘spiritual rest’ is both ‘the bond of this union’ between humanity and God and the space of the ministry of the Spirit.<sup>195</sup>

In addition, the Sabbath commandment leads humanity towards the following way of life: ‘That we might withdraw from all earthly anxieties, from all business affairs, to the end that we might surrender everything to God...we are neither impeded by nor occupied with anything else, so that we might be able to extend all our senses to recognize the benefits and favours with which he has enlarged us’.<sup>196</sup> Through the Sabbath commandment, one may confess that God is the gift-giver and humanity the gift-receiver. Calvin argues that the Sabbath commandment is given to humanity in order to enable them to use correctly divine gifts.<sup>197</sup> In Calvin’s mind, God entrusts his gifts of grace and favour to humanity on condition that they are used for the benefit of the common good of the church; included in these gifts are the time and space of the Sabbath, which God arranges within a legal context in order for humanity to recognize this condition within the Ten

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p.124.

<sup>193</sup> 2.8.34. pp.399-400.

<sup>194</sup> Calvin, Sermon Five (Thursday, June 20, 1555), Deut. 5:12-14(3), p.105.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p.110.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p.113.

Commandments. Thus, according to Calvin, the Sabbath is a special and sacred time when humanity leaves behind human goodness and moves towards the goodness of God.

Moreover, for Calvin the Sabbath has communal and practical purpose since it helps to cultivate believers' common lives of charity within and without the Church. This is in line with Paul's purpose for preserving the Sabbath: 'For he [Paul] prescribes that day to the Corinthians for gathering contributions to help the Jerusalem brethren (I Cor. 16:2)'.<sup>198</sup> Thus, Calvin understood the Sabbath to be an important element for maintaining the common good of the church, as discussed in his *Institutes* 1559.

Further, according to Calvin, the observance of the Sabbath has an additional social effect that is similar to the second use of the Law, in that it controls selfish desire in all humanity and directs them to gather for the public good of all. As he states, 'The Sabbath day was a [type of] civil order for training the faithful in the service of God...because of our weakness, even because of our laziness; it is necessary for one day to be chosen'.<sup>199</sup> Thus, for Calvin, this Sabbath commandment also works towards the common good of society.

Finally, in addition to the public good of the Sabbath related to worship and piety, Calvin notes the social and economic equality, 'to remit the labour of servants and animal...according to as love [*caritas*] dictates', which is encouraged by observance of the Sabbath.<sup>200</sup> Having said this, Calvin appears to explain his social and economic application of the Sabbath commandment in functional terms, for the realization of the common good of humankind, by focusing on its aspect of '[a form of] civil order', which is 'being done for [the sake of] charity'.<sup>201</sup> In the same sermon, Calvin also suggests the idea of 'the common charity'<sup>202</sup> for the advantage of all neighbours, who have the image of God in them.<sup>203</sup> His language of the Sabbath as a day for common charity demonstrates his understanding of the Sabbath as a time of civil, rather than spiritual order.

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<sup>198</sup> 2.8.34. p.399.

<sup>199</sup> Calvin, Sermon Five (Thursday, June 20, 1555), Deut. 5:12-14(3), p.108.

<sup>200</sup> See *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1.15, p.33; OS 1:48.

<sup>201</sup> Calvin, Sermon Five (Thursday, June 20, 1555), Deut. 5:12-14(3), pp.120-21.

<sup>202</sup> The idea of 'common charity' will be discussed in more detail regarding the Church and Society in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.126-27.



Consequently, for Calvin, the Sabbath commandment acts as a double sign: first, to demonstrate the self-denial of humanity and the reign of the Spirit of God, and secondly, to show common charity amongst humanity. As he states, ‘for there are two principal articles in the law of God: the one concerns what we owe him; the other what we owe our neighbours with whom we live’.<sup>204</sup>

#### 4.3.3. The second tablet<sup>205</sup>

What is the common principle of analysis contained in Calvin’s understanding of the second table of the Ten Commandments? How is this principle applicable to his interpretation of the commandment to love one’s neighbours in terms of the common good?

With regard to these questions, Miller argues that Calvin has a three-part approach to each commandment; its subject, its end, and its opposition; that is, the injunction to do good contained in the prohibition and the warning against doing bad in the command.<sup>206</sup> Miller suggests that the Reformed tradition assumed the opposite interpretation of each Commandment in order to open up ‘a larger sphere of good’ in the Decalogue: ‘every prohibition contains within itself a positive responsibility. Likewise, every positive command contains within itself a negative warning’. With this premise, Miller defines Calvin’s interpretation as having a three-part approach to a central hermeneutical principle, capturing the full range of the communal nuance of the Commandments.<sup>207</sup> Thus, one can suggest that, as Miller notes, this three-part approach may offer a decisive hermeneutical principle for extricating Calvin’s notion of the common good with relation to the second tablet.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p.122.

<sup>205</sup> William Stacy Johnson briefly suggests that Calvin’s communal idea of the second tablet as a ‘signpost’ for the formation of the positive social order to pursue ‘the promotion of human welfare’ could encourage Christians ‘to carry their own convictions into the civil arena’ in a way that contributes to ‘the common good’, whilst avoiding its literal application to a modern secular society. See Johnson, *John Calvin, Reformer for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), pp.83-84.

<sup>206</sup> Patrick D. Miller, “That It May Go Well with You: The Commandments and the Common Good”, in *In Search of the Common Good*, (New York, London: T&T Clark, 2005), p.29.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., pp.27-29.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

However, whereas Miller's hermeneutics focuses mainly on a structural aspect, my focus will, instead, be placed on a theological-anthropological aspect on Calvin: that is, the universal, active, and shared life 'fair-minded interpreters toward all' based on God's image in all humanity<sup>209</sup> Upon this theological assumption, there will be an investigation into Calvin's theological anthropological hermeneutic used to interpret the second tablet from the perspective of the common good.

What then is the theological logic underlying Calvin's understanding of the second tablet commandments? One may suggest that he consistently presents a triangular paradigm, that is, the image of God, the formation of the community, and the use of the Law; this paradigm is the theological anthropological foundation of communal values such as love of neighbours included in the prohibitive laws of the second tablet. There will now be an attempt to illustrate and explore the various 'layers' of this paradigm by considering Calvin's discussion of the second tablet Commandments in relation to his notions of the common good both at the divine and moral level.

Within the first layer, one can see that, for Calvin, the second tablet is not a set of negative commands aimed solely at preventing outward and visible bad actions, but rather prohibits all kinds of bad mindsets, which are inherent and hidden in humanity.<sup>210</sup> In addition, the second tablet encourages one to participate in doing good to others with a communal mind,<sup>211</sup> as shown in each of the commands therein.<sup>212</sup> For instance, Calvin believes the fundamental purpose of the eighth commandment not to steal lies in its aim to proclaim ethical values; that is, 'to protect and promote the well-being and interests of others' and 'to strive faithfully to help every man to keep his own possessions'.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1.21, p.36; OS 1:51; Ch 1.23, p.37; OS 1:52; also 2.8.46; OS 3:385; Calvin's *Sermons on Deuteronomy*. 5:16, p.134; c.f. 2.8.11; 5:17(3), pp.154-55; 2.8.35. p.401; *Comm. Genesis*. 2:2-3, pp.104-5.

<sup>210</sup> Calvin, *Sermon Eight* (Monday, July 1, 1555), Deut. 5:17(3), pp.154-59.

<sup>211</sup> As Miller notes, for Calvin, the commandment against killing is, in light of its subject and its end, not merely a prohibition against killing but rather a warning against harming one's neighbour in any way, since such opposition is inherent in the commandment in its fullest sense. Miller summarizes Calvin's idea by stating that, 'one is enjoined to do all one can for neighbour's good', citing Calvin's principle that 'we give our neighbour's life all the help we can', See "The Commandments and the Common Good", pp.14-40.

<sup>212</sup> 2.8.39. p.404; OS 3:379;

<sup>213</sup> 2.8.45. p.408; OS 3:384; 2.8.46. p.411; OS 3:386; Calvin, in his letter to ministers of Lyon, writes that 'if petty theft is punishable by law, it's doubly criminal to steal that which is held in common ownership [*le bien public*]', [my translation], CO 19:411.

Therefore, this eighth commandment must be regarded not as a simple, narrow, and negative, moral prohibition to be used for human social safety but rather as a broader, active, and positive norm of the graced community, in which humans protect all divine gifts given to each member, or, when necessary, return them to their intended recipient according to the divine economic plan.<sup>214</sup>

In the second layer of this paradigm, one can see that Calvin's stress on positive encouragement, rather than simple prohibition, as shown in the first layer, leads to the assumption that the third use of the Law, which demands inner obedience, is more vitally applied to these tablets than the second use, which merely controls apparently outward activity. For instance, according to Calvin, the eighth commandment focused upon the value of the common good, in that it was concerned with social responsibility and stewardship for the wellbeing of others. One may suggest that this idea is fully realized in Calvin's understanding of believers keeping the third use within their 'hearts' in order 'to protect and promote the well-being [*commodis*] and interests [*utilitatibus*] of others'.<sup>215</sup> Nevertheless, it is inferred that Calvin also extends the role of the eighth commandment into social members' participation with their 'hands' in the formation of public peace according to God's legislation. Likewise, one can suggest that both the third and the second use of the Law, as centre and periphery, can be utilized together in the second tablet of the Commandments. Through this, one may progress to the next layer of the paradigm, where justice and equality are realized by the full activation of solidarity amongst the children of God.<sup>216</sup>

Within this third layer, one can say that, according to Calvin's teaching on the second tablet, the value of 'justice and equity', as the prime formula for the common good, is embodied more by the third use of the Law than by the second use. For, a positive interpretation is possible due to the voluntary obedience of the people, although natural law is a useful, but less valuable tool, for promoting this. In spite of this, natural law is valuable for simply recognizing justice and equity as is the third use in the Decalogue. However, unlike natural law, the third use completely realizes 'equity and justice' by the

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<sup>214</sup> 2.8.45. pp.408-9. Regarding the first layer shown in the ninth and tenth commandment, see 2.8.47. pp.411-12; Sermon Eleven (Thursday, July 5, 1555), Deut. 5:20, p.205; 2.8.49, p.413.

<sup>215</sup> 2.8.46. pp.410-11; OS 3:385-86. Regarding the second layer shown in the sixth commandment, see Calvin, Sermon Eight (Monday, July 1, 1555), Deut. 5:17(3), p.164.

<sup>216</sup> Calvin, Sermon Eight (Monday, July 1, 1555), Deut. 5:17(3), p.163.

full activation of solidarity amongst the children of God, which Calvin regards as ‘the sum’ of the sixth commandment not to kill.<sup>217</sup> Moreover, regarding the eighth commandment not to steal, Calvin argues that there can be justice and equity only in a charitable life faithful to the will of God, primarily by believer’s third use of the law and also partially by humanity’s second use. Thus, when any human activities do not meet the criteria of justice and equity, these activities must be regarded as debts, which should eventually be repaid to one’s neighbours. This means that whoever does not pay this debt by wasting ‘his master’s goods’ or by not rendering ‘to every man what rightfully belongs to him’ should be regarded as a dishonest thief.<sup>218</sup> Here, Calvin appears to identify the value of justice and equity in this eighth (and ninth) commandment as being realized predominantly through the third use but also through the second use of the law, that is, through the observation of ‘natural law’ (*equite de nature*).<sup>219</sup>

Finally, in order to identify the fourth and final layer, one should ask what stands behind Calvin’s suggestion regarding the second tablet’s pursuance of the common good that the positive and broad command based mainly upon the third use of the Law is more essential than the negative and narrow command based upon the second use. Here it can be assumed that behind the positive command given by both this central third use and the peripheral natural law, there exists the deep ground of justice and equity. Behind this justice and equity there exists the deeper ground of human solidarity and social responsibility, and behind these there exists the deepest ground of the image of God in all people. In other words, Calvin first links his idea of the image of God in Christ with the Christian’s sacred solidarity within and outwith the church, then links God’s image in all people with humanity’s social solidarity. Calvin finally links this twofold communal theological anthropology with his twofold use of the Law in the second tablet. This will now be examined in more detail.

To begin with, Calvin suggests that ‘some common social [feature]’ existed in the human community which has ‘the same nature’, recognized as God’s image in all.<sup>220</sup> Next, Calvin’s recognition of the mutual relatedness between love of God and love of

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<sup>217</sup> See Calvin, Sermon Eight (Monday, July 1, 1555), Deut. 5:17(3), p.163.

<sup>218</sup> See Calvin, Sermon Ten (Wednesday, July 3, 1555), Deut. 5:19, pp.190-91; see also Sermon Thirteen (Tuesday, July 16, 1555), Deut. 5:22(3), p.247.

<sup>219</sup> Sermon Thirteen (Tuesday, July 16, 1555), Deut. 5:22(3), p.247.

<sup>220</sup> Sermon Eight (Monday, July 1, 1555), Deut. 5:17(3), p.151.

neighbours as represented in the Decalogue is embodied in his thoughts that both the respect of God's image and the consideration of humanity's blood ties are inseparable; these are represented as the double foundation, or 'twofold basis', of the command not to murder. As Calvin explains:

Scripture notes that this commandment rests upon a twofold basis: man is both the image of God, and our flesh. Now, if we do not wish to violate the image of God, we ought to hold our neighbour sacred...He who has merely refrained from shedding blood has not therefore avoided the crime of murder. If you perpetrate anything by deed, if you plot anything by attempt, if you wish or plan anything contrary to the safety of a neighbour, you are considered guilty of murder.<sup>221</sup>

Thus, basing his thoughts on the solidarity founded upon this theological anthropology, Calvin believed that God's ordained social order is based upon equality: 'men are equal (*pareils*)'.<sup>222</sup> In addition, the mutual regard of all people's equal rights based on their sharing the same image of God is that which 'opens the door to good relationships with men'.<sup>223</sup> In other words, when believers 'honestly walk in chastity and do not harm others', God's 'best and [most] justly ordered' communal ethics are established.<sup>224</sup> Thus, according to Calvin, 'to confront each other' is essentially 'to efface the image of God'.<sup>225</sup> The activity of destroying solidarity amongst humanity, regardless of its sort or degree, is nothing less than the act of murdering those who bear God's image: 'since man is created in the image of God, it is unlawful to make any aggression...If someone merely breaks into a prince's chests, that constitutes such a grave offense that he will be punished like a murderer. And why? For that also tends to confuse the public order [*polis*]'.<sup>226</sup>

Furthermore, for Calvin, the basis of the commandment not to steal rests upon the divine origin of humanity and human possessions. This commandment is communal, built upon human solidarity that is based on the image of God: 'For nature willed to bind men together in union and God made them all in his image'.<sup>227</sup> Thus, for Calvin, this eighth commandment is based upon the divine command for mutual reciprocity and

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<sup>221</sup> 2.8.40. pp.404-5; OS 3:380.

<sup>222</sup> Sermon Eight (Monday, July 1, 1555), Deut. 5:17(3), p.151.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p.152.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p.153.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p.153.

<sup>226</sup> Sermon Eight (Monday, July 1, 1555), Deut. 5:17(3), p.155.

<sup>227</sup> Sermon Ten (Wednesday, July 3, 1555), Deut. 5:19, p.191.

communication among all members of God's holy community. If one does not perform one's own communal obligation demanded by one's social position, one's behaviour falls short of the eighth commandment; for, in Calvin's mind, this commandment is fundamentally rooted within stewardship based on one's 'own calling'.<sup>228</sup> Given the above discussion, it would appear that Calvin views the eighth commandment from the perspective of the common good both at a divine and a moral level.

In addition, according to Calvin, the essential element of the ninth commandment is not based upon dry legalism, or carried out solely in order to protect superficial relationships among social members. Rather, it must be understood as a law based upon mutual willingness to share and communicate among social members the language of love, encouragement, truth, and goodness whilst avoiding the language of hatred, discouragement, falsehood, and wickedness.<sup>229</sup> In addition, one of the reasons why this commandment is so important in Calvin's theology of the common good is that it functions to sustain and preserve companionship and charity (intrinsic to the prosperity of the community) by keeping one's 'neighbour's good name' <sup>230</sup> amongst social members. Thus, falsehood and gossip, as attacks against the honour of one's neighbours, should be considered as wicked acts that break down the solidarity of the community and therefore compromise the common good.<sup>231</sup> Nevertheless, at this point, it should be remembered that although the good reputation of one's neighbour must be protected, the dishonour of a neighbour's bad actions ought to be exhorted, admonished, and finally corrected in order that they may be rerouted 'toward the good'.<sup>232</sup> Thus, flattery is not the language to protect the common good in terms of showing honour towards one's neighbour; however, the exhortation of love contributes to this common good by correcting neighbours' wrongdoings.

Given the above discussion of the 'first and second table', it can be concluded that for Calvin, the triangular paradigm of God's image in all humanity, the formation of solidarity within humanity, and the third use of the Law (along with the second use of the natural

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<sup>228</sup> 2.8.45. p.409; OS 3:384-85.

<sup>229</sup> Sermon Eleven (Thursday, July 5, 1555), Deut. 5:20, p.205.

<sup>230</sup> 2.8.48. p.412.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Sermon Eleven (Thursday, July 5, 1555), Deut. 5:20, p.212.

law) must be recognised as the most significant elements within his notion of the Decalogue as being a divine legalistic framework for the common good.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has looked at Calvin's understanding of the three stages of the Law and the Decalogue in relation to the common good. In order to set up its theological backdrop, at the start of this chapter, I noted that, one needs first to compare the different analyses of the Law offered by gift theologians and reformed grace theologians: a duty-based legalism compared with a 'free and spontaneous interplay' respectively. Overall, Calvin's thoughts move toward mutualism as argued by the latter, and, in that way, life for the common good is actualised.

This chapter has analyzed Calvin's understanding of the Law in relation to the common good according to three stages: first, the Law as being a way of life to share divine gifts for the common good of all humanity before the Fall: second, after the Fall, the first use of the Law can be a positive tool to recognise the split between God and humanity by preparing a preliminary space for the life for the common good, and also the second use of the Law can be both a controlling function of the outward action and direct role in the preservation of the social common good: third, in the redemption of Christ, the Law now functions as a restored way to activate believer's cheerful communion with God and neighbour, enabling them to again participate in the life for the common good by sharing the divine sweetness. In this context, we have seen that Christian freedom, in its three component categories: pedagogical, responsive and pastoral, plays a multiple but unifying role for the common good, dealing with the inner mind and external matters of believers. Thus, we can conclude that the three uses or functions of the Law are distinctive but inseparable in terms of their united cooperative work towards the common good.

Furthermore, this chapter would suggest that Calvin develops his idea on the role of the Law designed for the common good by his discussion of the Decalogue as well. Thus, this chapter has shown that how Calvin sees the Decalogue as being designed for the community of God's people, not simply as the embodiment of the natural law but rather as that of the third use of the Law, in that, by the interrelation of the above two laws, the first tablet restores the mutuality towards God and the second tablet prescribes how people should behave in society. Moreover, the Decalogue can be seen as being not just legal

commands to carry out onerous duties but as a sweet gift based on a voluntary set of ethics, which has been graciously given for the benefit of all in a similar way to the third use.

With this in mind, this chapter has also examined how Calvin understands the two tablets from the perspective of the common good. In the first table, Calvin's notion of the common good at both divine and moral level, can be shown by the benefit of public oath making and the Sabbath as a public promotion of self-denial, which is aimed at the primal relation with God and neighbours. This chapter has shown Calvin's implication that the second table contains a multiple-layered structure, which may provide us with the theological-anthropological foundation of divine command to the active life for the common good. The layers, moving from the outermost to the innermost, are as follows: the preference for persuasive and positive mindset, the centrality of the third use of the Law, the value of justice and equity, human solidarity and social responsibility, God's image in all humanity. Therefore, given Calvin's dynamic understanding of the Law in terms of the common good, there will now be an exploration of his employment of the third use of the Law within an ecclesial dimension.



## **PART B: THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION**

The first part of this thesis has discussed and demonstrated how Calvin's theological arguments on God's image, sanctification, and the Law constitute the main facets of his notion of the common good, both at divine and moral levels. In other words, it has shown how Calvin's notion of the common good, both at spiritual and social levels, can be likened to fabric woven together out of the three different threads of his tripartite focus on God's image in humanity, his Trinitarian focus on Christian self-denial and freedom, and his integral attention to the different uses and stages of the Law. Where, then, can Calvin's theological foundation of the common good be applied, and how can we carry out an investigation on his ministerial and social endeavours when practising his theory of the common good during his lifetime in Geneva? The remainder of the thesis will be devoted to elucidating two applied fields of Calvin's theory of the common good, within church and society. This analysis will cast light on how Calvin's theological enterprise of the common good was inter-connected with and realized in his ministerial and social activities. This will provide a valid practical backdrop to the modern trend within Calvin's studies of socio-economic discussion related to the common good, grounded in the theology elucidated in Part A.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE CHURCH AND THE COMMON GOOD**

In the previous chapter, where there was a discussion of Calvin's understanding of the Law from the perspective of his theology of the common good, it was concluded that Calvin unfolds the Law positively in a space of mutual and voluntary participation between God and humanity and amongst the human community. According to Calvin, the Law is a precious gift, which is given for caring and loving fellowship in both church and society. In the church, the value of love of neighbours or the common good is wholly realized through the third use of the Law, that is, the obedience of believers who have a graced and sweetened soul by the inspirational power of the Holy Spirit. In society, this value of the public good is partly realized through the second use of the Law, that is, the conforming of humanity to the natural law, resulting from the voice of human reason and conscience.

In what way, then, is the voluntary mutuality given to believers, who are participating in Christ by the Spirit, realized dynamically and positively in the Church? Moreover, where within Calvin's doctrine of the Church is this topic discussed? This chapter will discuss Calvin's understanding of the community-oriented principle, which comes from the mutual communion between Christ and believers in the Church. Consideration will also be given to his communal understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Calvin's ideas on the communal function of prayer and sacrament will be elucidated before attention is turned to his views on public offices and public property of the church from the perspective of the common good.

## 5.1. The Church as the body of Christ and the communal principle

Although Calvin stresses the issue of universal common grace,<sup>1</sup> he focuses his attention on the role of the Church as a channel of divine gifts distinct from the natural world, describing it as ‘a mirror of the grace and justice of God’. For Calvin, God shows His fatherly care for all His people through the Church, with His ‘ample provision for the supply of all their wants’.<sup>2</sup> In this context, as Otto Weber defines it, Calvin and the Reformers are men of the church (*vires ecclesiae*), who understand the Reformation (*reformatio*) as the restoration of the church and its up-building (*restitutio et aedificatio ecclesiae*).<sup>3</sup> This understanding of the Reformers is echoed in Calvin’s own words. For example, in his public opposition to Sadolet, Calvin declares that the sole purpose of the Reformers is to establish firmly ‘the safety of the Church of Geneva’ as well as ‘the public good of a city [Geneva]’ with ‘paternal affection’ and with ‘the zeal for the promotion and extension of the glory of God’s name’, which is ‘exceeding all thought and care for our [Reformers’] own good and advantage’.<sup>4</sup> This section will discuss Calvin’s particular thoughts on the church as the matrix of communal benefits for all members.

Given Calvin’s particular interest in the common good of the church and its theological importance and historical relevance in sixteenth century Geneva, it is perhaps surprising that there has been little in-depth study specifically focusing on his

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<sup>1</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 104:31, (CO 32:96C; CTS 11:169); 1.5.1-3, 6; 52-55, 58-59; Comm. *Psalms*. 19:4, pp.312-16. Both imply the cosmic level of common grace regarded as the ‘bounteous theatre’ which all humankind can recognise. Schreiner, *The Theatre of His Glory*, 121; Randall Zachman, “The Universe and the Living Image of God: Calvin’s Doctrine of Creation Reconsidered”, *CTQ* 61.4 (1997), pp.299-312, 302-3. Calvin’s idea of the common grace will be discussed with relation to the common good of humankind in chapter 6.

<sup>2</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 111:5.

<sup>3</sup> Otto Heinrich Weber, *Die Treue Gottes in der Geschichte der Kirche*, (Gesammelte Aufsätze: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), p.151. Though both Bucer and Calvin pursue the unity of the church, Bucer’s focus is unity in love and Calvin’s focus is unity in truth. See John Calvin, “Reply by Calvin to Cardinal Sadolet’s Letter”, in *Tracts and Letter Volume I*, Trans by Henry Beveridge, 60; and *Letters of John Calvin*, ed. Jules Bonnet (New York: Burt Franklin, 1972), Vol. 4. p.389; and Vol. 1. p.263 (Calvin to Farel, May 12, 1541); Pauck, *Calvin and Butzer*, p.89.

<sup>4</sup> Calvin, “Reply by Calvin to Sadolet”, pp.27-34; see also Calvin’s letter to Condé in 1563, CO 20:14, ‘you cannot retract the Confession [of faith] that you have made and which has been published, unless you are given a very good reason to do so. I know there is no need for me to say that I am only seeking God’s glory, the common good of his Church [*la gloire de Dieu, le bien commung* [sic] *de son Eglise*], as well as your own honour, because I do not think that you view me as someone who is concerned only for their own reputation’. [My translation.]

understanding of the common good of the church amongst studies that have touched on his church doctrine.<sup>5</sup>

In order to redress this imbalance, it may be helpful first to clarify Calvin's main theological framework from which his conceptualization of the common good has emerged. A review of past research suggests that the debate surrounding the central theme of Calvin's theology is still underway.<sup>6</sup> There are five different scholarly opinions regarding Calvin's doctrine of the church: Doumergue's God-centred approach,<sup>7</sup> the Christ-centred approach under the umbrella of Karl Barth,<sup>8</sup> a third standpoint of pneumatology by Warfield,<sup>9</sup> a recent Trinitarian viewpoint proposed by Butin,<sup>10</sup> and the 'Union with Christ' perspective offered by Partee.<sup>11</sup> Which of these opinions is best substantiated by Calvin's writings? In the following discussion, it will be argued that central to Calvin's theology of 'the common good of the church' is union with Christ and

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<sup>5</sup> With regard to research that has touched upon Calvin's doctrine of the Church, see for example *Calvin and the Church*, ed. David Foxgrover (Grand Rapids: Michigan: Calvin Studies Society Papers, 2002); Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp.3-48, 195-248; Harro Höpel, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp.56-151; Wendel, *Calvin*, pp.291-355; Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, pp.30-64, 157-173; Timothy George (ed.), *John Calvin & the Church*, pp.96-155; Philip W. Butin, *Reformed Ecclesiology, Trinitarian Grace According to Calvin*, (Princeton Theological Seminary: Studies in Reformed Theology and History 2.1, 1994); William G. Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation*, (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, pp.220-268; Partee, *Calvin*, pp.258-296.

<sup>6</sup> See Charles Partee, "Calvin's Central Dogma Again", *SCJ* 18.2 (1987), pp.191-200.

<sup>7</sup> E. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin, Les homes et les choses de son temps*. Vols. IV. p.37.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T. Clark, 1957), II, 1, p.149 and IV, 3, 2, pp.539ff; Niesel, *Calvin*, pp.9-21, 246-250; David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology*, (Leiden: Brill, 1966); Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, pp.13-22.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, "John Calvin the Theologian," in *Calvin and Augustine*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1956); and "Introductory Note," in *The Works of the Holy Spirit*, by Abraham Kuyper, trans. Henri De Vries (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1900), xxxiii-xxxiv, xxxvii.; Elias Dantas, "Calvin, the Theologian of the Holy Spirit", in *John Calvin And Evangelical Theology: Legacy and Prospect*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), p.129.

<sup>10</sup> Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption, and Response, Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and "Reformed Ecclesiology Trinitarian Grace According to Calvin", *SRT* 2.1 (1994), pp.1-46; Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.80-81.

<sup>11</sup> Partee, "Calvin's Central Dogma Again", pp.191-200; *The Theology of John Calvin*, pp.40-43, 193-200.

the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the whole community.<sup>12</sup> It will be helpful to examine these in more detail.

However, before beginning this discussion, one should not overlook Calvin's understanding of the role of God the Father in his theology of the common good of the church. For Calvin, God the Father must be the ultimate protector of the 'welfare' of the church, although He seems to be somewhat behind the scenes and is mentioned by Calvin relatively less frequently than the direct role of Christ and the mediating role of the Spirit.<sup>13</sup> With this in mind, individual believers must learn to take comfort from the communal promise of the welfare given to the Church by the Father.<sup>14</sup> As Calvin himself illustrates:

The mountains which environ Jerusalem are exhibited as a mirror, in which they may see, beyond all doubt, that the Church is as well defended from all perils, as if it were surrounded on all sides with like walls and bulwarks...whenever God speaks to all his people in a body, he addresses himself also to each of them in particular. As not a few of the promises are extended generally to the whole body of the church...each apply to himself whatever God promises to his Church in common'.<sup>15</sup>

With this in mind, there will now follow a discussion of the central function of union with Christ regarding the common good of the church.<sup>16</sup>

First, for Calvin, a genuine life for the common good in the church cannot be obtained or realized by any human communication among members without their having within them a Christ-centred anthropological locus realized by 'a union with Jesus Christ'.<sup>17</sup> Thus, to Calvin, union with Christ is the stronghold of the common good of the

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<sup>12</sup> Wendel clarifies Calvin's thoughts on the centrality of both union with Christ and the sanctifying gifts of the Spirit for believers. Wendel's understanding may also help to explain Calvin's ideas on the vital role of union with Christ and the practical gifts of the Spirit for the common good of the Church (*Calvin*, pp.266-67, 302). Partee suggests 'the Union with Christ' is Calvin's special key to unlocking his various theological 'rooms' and pivotal to his *Institutes*, ("Calvin's Central Dogma Again", pp.191-200). See also Tamburello, *Union with Christ*, pp.84-101; Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), pp.89-148, 149-196.

<sup>13</sup> Comm. *Psalms* 106; CO 32:117, quoted in Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.201.

<sup>14</sup> Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.201; Comm. *Heb.* 2:13, CO 55:31; Comm. *Psalms* 94:6, CO 32:20.

<sup>15</sup> Comm *Psalms*. 125:1-2, p.90; Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.201.

<sup>16</sup> The gift of the Spirit will be discussed in the following section.

<sup>17</sup> *Sermons on Acts*, 4:32-37, p.180.

church,<sup>18</sup> and the common good of the church is the teleological vision of believers' life in union with Christ. Calvin teaches that 'God has joined us together, and has tied us together (as it were) in one body, and will have us every man to employ himself for his neighbours, that no man be given to himself, but for one another in common'.<sup>19</sup> In particular, according to Calvin, what calls people to be united in Christ is God's unchangeable and undivided teaching on His truth. Thus, believers' unified confession of faith to this 'truth' in Christ can be the permanent foundation for their binding 'in complete love and brotherhood' with the same heart and soul in the Trinitarian mode: 'we have the same Spirit of God who guides us so that we will be joined together'.<sup>20</sup>

Here, the possibility of the common good of the church is consistently implicated in believers' shared activity by their having the 'same heart and the same soul', since they live 'in one faith, hope, and love, and in the same Spirit of God' within 'the mystical body of Christ' (*corpus Christi mysticum*).<sup>21</sup> It is useful to look here at the active and activated communion of saints by 'the secret efficacy of the Spirit',<sup>22</sup> which Calvin believes is due both to God 'the common Father' and Christ 'the common Head' being the common ground that unites all believers.<sup>23</sup> Thus, one can see, as Wallace analyses, Calvin articulates that believers' participation in sanctification must be found not in individual isolation but in the communal fellowship in the Church aligned with the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> With relation to this, it is notable that Calvin recognizes Christ as the common good, defined as the shared inheritance of the church, in his sermons on *Matthew* Ch 28, CO 46:951-952, 'we are justified in our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we can attain the glory of Heaven, as He does not want to be separated from us. This is why He calls his disciples His brothers...He used this word to demonstrate the brotherly love [*la fraternite*] He had for them. Whatever happens, he [Christ] is also our shared inheritance [*Mais tant y a qu'il nous est aussi bien commun*], as St John put it better'. [My translation.]

<sup>19</sup> *Sermons on 1 Timothy*, 6:17-19, p.642.

<sup>20</sup> *Sermons on Acts*. 4:32-37, pp.178-81.

<sup>21</sup> *Sermons on Acts*. 4:32-37, p.181; 4.1.2. p.21; *Inst.* 1536, 21. (=CO 22:57; CO 5:341; OS 1:400-401; also *Inst.* 1536, 2.30, p.86; OS 1:78, 92 (CO 1:77-78)

<sup>22</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 2, 21, pp.78-79; OS 1:86 (= CO 1:78); *Comm. John*. 14:20 (CO 47:331); Partee, "Calvin's Central Doctrine Again," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 18, (1987), p.186; Tamburello, *Union with Christ*, pp.84-93.

<sup>23</sup> 4.1.3. p.1015; also *Comm. Psalms*. 20:9, p.343; *Sermons on Acts*. 4:32-37, p.188.

<sup>24</sup> Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 198; *Comm. Romans*. 8:14, CO 49:147. Canlis argues that, for Calvin, believers can be genuinely particularized not by 'looking within' but 'looking without' only through their intimacy in the *koinonia* of Christ. In this manner, 'Calvin's doctrine of participation finds as its focal points the church's participation in Christ' (*Calvin's Ladder*, p.247).

Next, for Calvin, one can suggest that the ‘communion of saints’ is important in the body of Christ; this communion is regarded as the operating mode of the society of Christ, based upon a Christ-centred anthropology in which the various gifts of God are shared for the benefit of the community.<sup>25</sup> Here, it is notable that Calvin’s term, ‘*sanctorum communion*’ (*la communion des fideles*) in his Catechism of the Church of Geneva is identified by Calvin with ‘*Corpus Christi*’ (*le corps du Seigneur Iesus*), which is granted for reconciliation (*reconciliationem*).<sup>26</sup> He also teaches the purpose of the communion of saints (*sanctorum communione*) as follows:

That is put down to express more clearly the unity which exists among the members of the Church. It is at the same time intimated, that whatever benefits God bestows upon the Church, have a view to the common good of all [*in commune omnium bonum*]; seeing they all have communion with each other.<sup>27</sup>

One ought to note that Calvin thoroughly demonstrates and unfolds the definition and characteristics of ‘the communion with saints’ as representing the body of Christ, by showing the condition of the believer’s activity for the common good of all members. Thus, for Calvin, Christians are called to be ‘the spiritual and mystical body of Christ’ (*spirituale et Arcanum Christi corpus*).<sup>28</sup>

Continuing his focus on the body of Christ, Calvin makes use of Paul’s and Moses’ language of husband and wife to explain how Christ and humanity can constitute one person with the same nature; this nature is not achieved according to ‘human nature’ but rather according to ‘the power of His Spirit’: ‘the wife was formed of the flesh and bones of her husband. Such is the union between us and Christ, who in some sort makes us partakers of his substance. “We are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh,” (Gen. ii.23;).’<sup>29</sup> In other words, according to Calvin, as the language of the human body is a good substantial metaphor for demonstrating the ‘mysterious communication’ (*mystica communicatio*)<sup>30</sup> between Christ and the Christian in the Church, so the language of

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<sup>25</sup> 4.1.3. p.1014.

<sup>26</sup> OS 2:89-91; CO 6:39-40,125-126.

<sup>27</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, in *John Calvin Tracts and Letters*, Vol 2: Tracts, Part 2, p.51; OS 2:89; OS 1:400-401.

<sup>28</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 12:12, p.405; CO 49:501.

<sup>29</sup> Comm. *Ephesians*. 5:31-32, p.324.

<sup>30</sup> Comm. *Ephesians*. 5:29, p.322-323, CO 51:225; Comm. *Ephesians*. 5:31, p.323; CO 51:226.

marriage can be a more dynamic and relevant metaphor for the mystical body of Christ and Church.

How then does this mystical union illuminate Calvin's thoughts on the common good? One may suggest that it forms the basis of his premise statement on the organic mode of being and the activity of the church. This will now be illustrated in more detail.

To begin with, according to Niesel, Calvin believes that 'the church is not a rigid institution but a living organism, a fellowship of mutual service and helpfulness'.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the church is not a static system but a living and life-giving community. In a similar vein, for Wendel, the organic features of the Church can be understood as communal sanctification through 'the action of Christ in us'.<sup>32</sup> For Leith, believers' 'mutual love' in Calvin's analogy of the human body 'reveals the organic nature of the communion' of the church.<sup>33</sup> Echoing these ideas, Ganoczy suggests that the concepts of the mystical body, Christ-centred fellowship, and the spiritual characteristics of church offices all appear in Calvin's writings on the Church.<sup>34</sup> Among these organic characteristics of the church, there are several aspects that Calvin especially notes from a communal perspective.

A key idea for Calvin is that the service of the church is based not upon a structured hierarchical order, but upon a mutual communication grounded in horizontal equality, in which brothers and sisters who receive the various gifts of grace are reliant upon and must 'cleave to' each other.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, for Calvin, the organic structure of the church is rooted in the principle of mutual service among equal 'colleagues', colleagues who share the same human rights and social status, rather than an unbalanced relationship between 'master' and 'servant'.<sup>36</sup> However, in Calvin's mind, the organic characteristics of this equal partnership can be applied not only to the diversely talented, but also to those with differing levels of competence. Accordingly, Calvin believes that, since the church as the organic body regards the 'inconvenience' of weak members and the advantage of 'honoured' members as equal, it cherishes the system of caring for the 'parts that involve

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<sup>31</sup> Niesel, *Calvin*, p.188; 4.1.2; OS 1:466.

<sup>32</sup> Wendel, *Calvin*, pp.295-96.

<sup>33</sup> CO 51:203 quoted in Leith, *Christian Life*, p.176.

<sup>34</sup> Ganoczy, *Calvin, Theologien de l'église et du Ministère*, 1964, pp.420-33.

<sup>35</sup> 4.6.9. p.1110.

<sup>36</sup> 4.6.7. pp.1108-9; Comm. *Ephesians*. 4:11, pp.280-81.



shame, or are less comely' or 'the parts that are less honourable' with even 'greater concern'. By doing this, believers can follow a particular path, which avoids 'the common disgrace of the whole body' but contrives towards 'the safety of the body'.<sup>37</sup> In light of this, Hass suggests that, for Calvin, the 'mutual kindness, edification, and service' among believers 'involves a regard for the weak and the lowly, accommodating to them so as to help them lovingly on their way', and therefore, 'it also involves sharing our gifts and resources with each other for the up-building of all fellow believers for the common good'.<sup>38</sup> In addition, for Calvin, the church as a living organism composes its 'design of this progress' in a manner that enables believers to 'grow up in every way into him [Christ] who is the Head'. With regard to this growth, Calvin uses the image of maternal love, which is universal, for the ministry of church as 'the common mother'<sup>39</sup> to show its nourishing role to 'accomplish the building up of the body of Christ' (*in aedificationem corporis Christi*).<sup>40</sup> According to Calvin, the organic church is dedicated to the positive and active communication of goodness among its members.<sup>41</sup> It is the place where believers, as beloved children of the Heavenly Father, communicate together in a voluntary way with 'a joyful heart'.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, with regard to these organic characteristics, it is important to note that Calvin's definition of the church as the mystical body is a metaphor that expresses the spiritual substantiality of this body. This indicates that, for Calvin, 'the mystical body' does not mean a substantial or ontological fusion or identification of Christ and the believer, as Osiander argues, but rather implies 'the spiritual union between Christ and the Church' (*spiritualis Christi unio cum Ecclesia*).<sup>43</sup> According to Leith, 'this mystical or personal union of the believer with Christ' in Calvin's doctrine of the church can be understood not in 'any substantial sense' but as 'the bond of union', namely, the Holy Spirit, in that 'his [the Spirit's] is not merely a bond which unites the believer to Christ; he is a life-giving Spirit through whom the believer receives the grace of Christ'.<sup>44</sup> This

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<sup>37</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 12:21-23, 26, pp.410-12.

<sup>38</sup> Hass, *The Concept of Equity in Calvin's Ethics*, p.114.

<sup>39</sup> Comm. *Ephesians*. 4:12, p.282.

<sup>40</sup> 4.3.2. p.1055; CO 2:776-778.

<sup>41</sup> *Sermons on Acts*. 4:32-37, p.178.

<sup>42</sup> *Sermons on Acts*. 5:16, p.192.

<sup>43</sup> Comm. *Ephesians*. 5:31; CO 51:226.

<sup>44</sup> Leith, *Christian Life*, p.177; 3.11.1 and 5.

definition of the spiritual union is crucial to understanding the real connection between Christ and believers and among believers and the sharing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Also, with regard to the organic characteristics of the church, the church is both visible and invisible and also manifests both spiritual unity and material solidarity<sup>45</sup> within itself. Regarding the church's visibility and invisibility, Calvin places the communion of saints (*sanctorum communicatio*) upon the foundation of the mysterious union and communion with Christ (*unio communicioque mystica cum Christo*),<sup>46</sup> not only by identifying it with the elect but by also by linking it with the external church (*externa ecclesia*).<sup>47</sup> Regarding the church's unity and solidarity, Calvin believes that 'since the poor are members of Jesus Christ, participating in the same grace and the same spirit', wealthier church members should share with the poor 'those goods of which they are only the distributors in this world' according to their spiritual bond.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, for Calvin, the value of the common good in the organic church cannot be fully appreciated only by spiritual unity or by simple physical solidarity alone, since the fellowship of the church involves both spiritual matters and the sharing of every gift.<sup>49</sup> In summary, Calvin manifests that the visible church can be integrated into the invisible church as 'the true church of God', only when the visible church participates in spiritual and material 'charity' to benefit all people.<sup>50</sup>

Consequently, in Calvin's mind, the church as 'the mystical body', comprising organic communion, spiritual union, and physical solidarity, is recognized not only as the elected people of God but also as the united gift-sharing community in the world.<sup>51</sup> One may say that this understanding of Calvin's doctrine of the church can help clarify and

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<sup>45</sup> This will be discussed in more detail in the socio-economic application of chapter 6.

<sup>46</sup> It is clear that Calvin's understanding of the being and mode of the Church and its orientation towards the common good is indebted mainly to St. Paul's doctrine of the Church and its communal principle, and in part to St. Augustine and Bucer. This will be discussed in more detail in section 2.

<sup>47</sup> 4.1.3; OS 5:4-5; CO 2:747.

<sup>48</sup> *Sermons on Acts*. 5:1-6, p.194.

<sup>49</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, pp.179, 181; Pattison, *Poverty*, pp.309-345; *Sermons on Acts*. 4:32-37, pp.181-84.

<sup>50</sup> *Sermons on Acts*. 4:32-37, pp.187-88. In addition, Calvin stresses that 'the perfecting of the church consists not only in the ultimate redemption of believers as individuals but also in their consummation as a totality' by regarding a visible communion of all the elect as an eschatological reality. See Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, p.177.

<sup>51</sup> *Inst.* 1536 ; OS 1:91-92; CO 1:77-78; also *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques*, 1561.

develop the theological-anthropological and practical aspects of the ecclesial dimension of his thoughts on the common good.

This then leads back to the question; in what way, according to Calvin, does Christ as the head of the church<sup>52</sup> show His example for the common good of His body the church? As discussed in Chapter Three, Calvin answers this question by investigating the key elements of the communal implications of his Christology within a Trinitarian context. Here, the following section will examine how Calvin expresses his thoughts on the common good of the church in relation to the gift of the Spirit within the church.

## **5.2. The Gifts of the Spirit for the common good of the church**

As discussed in Chapter Three, Calvin explicitly shows that Christ is the model of sanctified life for the common good. How, then, is this Christological model actually delivered to believers? According to Calvin, this process of identification with Christ is possible and realizable only through faith, working in both heart and mind, as ‘a singular gift of God’.<sup>53</sup> It is the Spirit who activates this faith: ‘Faith is the principle work of the Holy Spirit’.<sup>54</sup> Thus the believer’s sanctified life for the common good can be regarded as Christological in that it is through identification with Christ that believers become sanctified as the adopted children of God and grow in their common life. Likewise, this sanctified life is also pneumatological in that it is only through the Spirit that believers’ identification with Christ, as faithful followers of His model for the common good, is made both achievable and real.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> In his *Catechism* of 1538, Calvin prefers to use the image of Christ as head of the church though he also describes the church as the Body of Christ (*Calvin’s First Catechism*, pp.25-26). In his final edition of the *Institutes* of 1559, he seems to emphasize the image of Christ as head of the church as the more fundamental background to believers ‘being joined and knit together’ as one body, See 4.1.2-3. pp.1013-16. Related to this, Partee stresses that ‘the scriptural figure of head and body is a central to Calvin’s doctrine of the church’, and, particularly, Christ’s headship is emphasized with ‘both architectural and anatomical tropes’, as in Comm. *1 Peter*. 2:7-8 and Comm. *Ephesians*. 1:22 (*Calvin*, pp.262-63).

<sup>53</sup> 3.2.33; Hesselink, *On Being Reformed: Distinctive Characteristics and Common Misunderstandings*, (New York: Reformed Church Press, 1988), p.70.

<sup>54</sup> 3.1.4. p.541. Regarding the inter-relation between the Holy Spirit and (freely given) Faith as His entire work (4.14.8), see Victor Shepherd, *The Nature and Functions of Faith in the Theology of John Calvin*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 1983), pp.20-24, 80-81.

<sup>55</sup> Dantas suggests that in Calvin’s mind, the process of identification with Christ is the common denominator underlying justification and sanctification. Elias Dantas, “Calvin, the Theologian of the Holy Spirit”, in *John Calvin and Evangelical Theology*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), p.138.

However, according to Elbert and Cheng, though writers in the Reformed tradition have dealt adequately with the saving role of the Holy Spirit regarding the Word and sanctification by relating it to union with Christ in faith and holiness,<sup>56</sup> the equally important works of the Holy Spirit in showing divine gifts as the visible, tangible, and concrete evidence of grace to believers have been neglected.<sup>57</sup> However, as Elbert notes, it is important to take heed of Parks' statement that 'to insist that grace be without gifts is to frustrate the very grace of God. Gifts exist in order that grace may come out of the abstract into the concrete...If faith without works is a dead thing, so likewise is grace without gifts'.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, as Cheng notes, it was not so long ago that Reformed theologians such as Hesselink maintained 'an open and positive attitude towards the recent development of the Charismatic movement', despite keeping in mind its limitations.<sup>59</sup> Due to this neglected area in pneumatological studies,<sup>60</sup> research into Calvin's focused idea on the centrality of the common good in his doctrine of the church has likewise not been fully examined or developed from this pneumatological perspective. In the following section, therefore, this neglected area will be examined in detail.

As Willis rightly notes with regard to the inter-relation between the Holy Spirit and divine gifts, Calvin believes that both grace and gifts are always inter-connected within the mutual context between 'the person and work of Christ in constant reference to the Spirit'

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<sup>56</sup> Yang-en Cheng, "Calvin on the Work of the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts" in *Calvin in Asian Churches*, ed. Sou-Young Lee (Seoul, Korea: PCTS Press, 2008), p.121; Wendel, *Calvin*, p.242; Alasdair Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 101-106; Jelle Faber, "The Saving Work of the Holy Spirit in Calvin", in *Calvin and the Holy Spirit*, ed. Peter De Klerk (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 1989), pp.1-11.

<sup>57</sup> Elbert, "Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts", pp.135-256, 236; D. Baker, "The Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:14", *EvQ* 46 (1974), p.224.

<sup>58</sup> H. Parks, "Charisma: What's in a Word?" *Renewal*, 52 (1974), p.21; cited in Elbert, "Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts", p.238.

<sup>59</sup> Cheng, "Calvin on Spiritual Gifts", p.123; Hesselink concludes that both the individual-spontaneous aspect of the Spirit's work, focused by Pentacostal Christians and the continuing collective manifestations of the Spirit, stressed by the Reformed tradition need each other, see "The Charismatic Movement and the Reformed Tradition", in *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, ed. Donald McKim (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1992), p.384.

<sup>60</sup> Regarding pneumatological and charismatic studies of Calvin's theology, see Elbert, "Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts", pp.236-256; Leonard Sweetman, "What is The Meaning of These Gifts?", in *Calvin and the Holy Spirit* ed. Peter De Klerk (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 1989), pp.117-130; Beth Yvonne Langstaff, "Temporary Gifts: John Calvin's Doctrine of the Cessation of Miracles", Diss. (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1999), p.185; Jacob D. Dodson, "Gifted in Love and Called To Be One: Toward a Trinitarian and Ecumenical Theology of the Charisms", Diss. (Regent University, 2010).

and ‘the reality and work of the Spirit in constant reference to Christ’.<sup>61</sup> He concludes that, for Calvin, Christ can be regarded as the common ground for grace and gifts.<sup>62</sup> Thus, Christ is always the Spirit-giving ‘author of grace and gifts’ within the Trinitarian light.<sup>63</sup> With this in mind, Calvin explains with regard to Christ’s baptism that Christ ‘received the Spirit on that occasion not so much for Himself as for His people. And the Spirit descended visibly that we may know that in Christ dwells the abundance of all gifts of which we are destitute and empty’.<sup>64</sup> Accordingly, through the Spirit, believers can receive a clear intellectual recognition and volitional obedience of ‘divine goodness’ in Christ, both by ‘kindling their hearts’ and ‘boiling away the vices’.<sup>65</sup> In this manner, believers are led to do ‘good works’ as the fruits of the Spirit’s grace and excellence.<sup>66</sup>

Basing his discussion upon Paul’s theology of the gift of grace, which utilizes the parable language of the human body, Calvin searches out the communal implications of the gifts of the Spirit within the dimension of the church. Thus, it is important to examine in detail Calvin’s study of Paul as this is crucial in establishing Calvin’s biblical thoughts on the common good. Calvin makes use of Paul’s language in order to explore the subject of public value, which believers pursue through the gifts of the Spirit. However, it is worth noting that Calvin did not unfold his distinctive thoughts on the definition, character, and purpose of ‘the public interests of the gifts of the Spirit’ outwith the context of his commentary on the New Testament by focusing more on the classical and moral level. Rather, he consistently and progressively discusses ‘the gifts of the Spirit’ according to the principle of ‘the common good of the church’ within the context of his biblical interpretation by focusing mainly on the divine and social level. These will now be examined in turn.

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<sup>61</sup> Wills, *Calvin’s Catholic Christology*, p.82.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid; Calvin’s Catechism of 1538, pp.24-25.

<sup>63</sup> Comm. *Galatians*, p.174, (CNTC); Comm. *John* 1:32, 35, (CNTC); CO 47:28; *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, in *John Calvin Tracts and Letters*, Vol 2: Tracts, Part 2, pp.42-43; Elbert, “Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts”, p.239; 3.1.1.

<sup>64</sup> Comm. *John*. 1:32, p.35, (CNTC); CO 47:28. The correlation between baptism and the common good will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Calvin’s Catechism of 1538’, p.25. In his sermon on *Titus* 3:4-7, Calvin teaches that ‘Jesus Christ came provided with all the good things that were necessary for the spiritual welfare of our souls. The Holy Spirit was given to him [Christ] in all his fullness, so that he should confer on each of us an appropriate measure and portion of the Spirit’. In Calvin, *Grace and its Fruits*, (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 2000), p.285.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

To begin with, in his commentary on I Corinthians 14, Calvin defines the concept of grace using the language of gift-giving: grace is the foundation of the gift, and the gift is the practical operation of grace. In addition, as noted by Elbert, Calvin recognizes the fruits of the Spirit as ‘the operational basis in practice for the genuine exercise of the gifts of the Spirit’.<sup>67</sup> He states that ‘He [Paul] now informs us that all virtues, all proper and well regulated affections, proceed from the Spirit, that is, from the grace of God, and the renewed nature which we derive from Christ’.<sup>68</sup> These fruits represent the believer’s renewed character, which is desired, given, and cultivated in Christ by the Spirit for the benefit of the Church. For example, joy, as a fruit of the Spirit, produces in believers the ‘cheerful behaviour towards our fellow-men’.<sup>69</sup> Thus, one can say that, for Calvin, the fruits of the Spirit function to connect the grace of God with the right use of His gifts for the communal benefit.

How, then, does Calvin manifest the organic features of the ontology of the church, which receive and comprise the gifts of grace from God? It would appear that he returns to Paul’s metaphorical language of the human body in order to explore this issue. First, by citing Menenius Agrippa’s parable of the body and limbs, Calvin argues that this metaphor is not applied only to the case of the church: ‘for any society of men, or congregation, to be called a body, as one city constitutes a body, and so, in like manner, one senate, and one people’.<sup>70</sup> However, Calvin recognizes that there exists an essential difference between the Church and the State as ‘a mere political body’, as the former is the ‘spiritual and mystical body of Christ’.<sup>71</sup> Calvin goes on to explain a correspondence between Paul’s metaphor and Agrippa’s parable regarding the ontology of the mutual relationship among members of the human body. Thus, one can see that the theological anthropological locus of Calvin’s thoughts on ‘our common advantage’ (*in commune bonum nostrum*) are formed through the use of both biblical and classical metaphorical language of the human body.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Elbert, “Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts”, p.237.

<sup>68</sup> Comm. *Galatians*. 5:22, p.167.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Comm. *I Corinthians*. 12:12, pp.404-5.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.405.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., Latin p.504

What, then, are the communal implications contained in the diversity of gift giving in Calvin's theology of the body of Christ? According to Calvin, Christ does not entrust all gifts only to one member; rather He variously distributes the gifts of the Spirit to the Church in a manner that enables solidarity, unity, and interdependence among members.<sup>73</sup> A number of points can be made to flesh this out.

First of all, there is a divine order where the mode of life to pursue mutual interdependence and respect can be built upon modesty and humility.<sup>74</sup> Thus, for Calvin, 'the limited amount of gifts' given to humanity ensures that no one individual can take responsibility for everything; this is a system designed to encourage social cooperation and communal activity.<sup>75</sup> In order to achieve this social cooperation, believers should hold 'a regard to the common advantage' by resting satisfied with their own place and station, submitting to the providence of God, subjecting themselves to the arrangement which God has appointed, and showing mutual affection and concern towards others.<sup>76</sup> Calvin, therefore, urges believers to overcome the wrongly ambitious use of gifts from God and to pursue rightly these gifts 'for the advantage of the church'.<sup>77</sup> As he states:

For it is necessary to the common benefit of the body that no one should be furnished with fullness of gifts, lest he should heedlessly despise his brethren...the gifts of God are so distributed that each has a limited portion, and that each ought to be so attentive in imparting his own gifts to the edification of the Church, that one, by leaving his own function, may trespass on that of another. By this most beautiful order, and as it were symmetry, is the safety of the Church indeed

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<sup>73</sup> Comm. *Ephesians*. 4:7 (CO 51:192); Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 4:7, 12:4, 7; Comm. *Romans*. 12:6; Comm. *Acts*. 8:21; see also Niesel, *Calvin*, p.200.

<sup>74</sup> CO 46:694, *Sermons on Luke* Ch 4, 'we should not reject the good things that He is preparing for us. We know that He is the source of these things, a source that never runs out. When He chooses others rather than us, we should not be jealous or grumble about this...we should know that anything that people receive that others do not receive is to be used for the common good of the whole body of the Church [*c'est pour l'appliquer au bien commun de tout le corps de l'Eglise*]. Those who have fewer gifts should know that this is an opportunity to be humble and to quietly accept the leadership...we must accept that He [God] operates according to His decisions and that we should accept that everything He does is good and just and well-ordered', [my translation]; CO 25:705, *Sermons on Deuteronomy* 1:37-42, 'we are in rebellion against God...when we are affected by envy or jealousy...if someone has more of God's gifts than I do, I am rich through this person. Because when we profess the communion of Saints, it's to demonstrate that everything that God gives to each one of us is all to our common edification [*profit commun*]'. [My translation.]

<sup>75</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries*, pp.390-92; Comm. *Genesis*. 40:6-8.

<sup>76</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians* 12:15, 12:18, 12:19, 12:27, pp.409-412.

<sup>77</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians* 14:1, p.434.

preserved; that is, when everyone imparts to all in common what he has received from the Lord, in such a way as not to impede others.<sup>78</sup>

Secondly, according to Calvin, the gift-giving system of the Spirit bans the negative function of fostering believers' competitiveness towards others; rather, it encourages believers' 'zeal' to actively do good for others. As he states,

God has distributed various gifts to us...so that everyone is to conduct himself according to the measure of his capacity...to be content with his lot, and willingly to abstain from usurping the offices of others...how much diligence there ought to be in all, so that they may contribute to the common good of the body according to the faculties they possess.<sup>79</sup>

Thirdly, for Calvin, the gift giving of the Spirit informs clearly the idea of unity in diversity, that is 'a manifold unity' and 'symmetry'.<sup>80</sup> This means that the diversity of gifts need not lead to mutual discord and conflict but rather becomes an accelerant 'to promote and strengthen the harmony of believers' in all cases, no matter how trivial, 'as the various tones in music produce sweet melody'.<sup>81</sup> Calvin uses other metaphors inspired by the natural world in order to put forward this same idea: "'Believers,'" says he [Paul], "are endowed with different gifts, but let everyone acknowledge, that he is indebted for whatever he has to this Spirit of God, for he [God] pours forth his gifts as the sun scatters his rays in every direction".<sup>82</sup> Likewise, this varied distribution of the gifts of the Spirit also helps to realize the communion and communication of the saints, which Elbert designates 'an interpersonal Spirit-motivated sharing process'.<sup>83</sup> Also, the gift-giving of the Spirit is actively matched to the ontological identity of the church, which includes the divine intention, that is, the construction of unity and beneficial sharing through mutual communication, as though it were 'a divine reservoir within the body to refresh the world with deeds of love'.<sup>84</sup>

With the communal implications of the diversity of gift giving in mind, one next needs to examine Calvin's understanding of the various offices established as a

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<sup>78</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 12:6, p.459; CO 49:237-8; c.f. 3.7.5.

<sup>79</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 12:4, p.458; 12:11, p.465.

<sup>80</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 12:4, pp.397-98.

<sup>81</sup> Comm. *Ephesians*. 4:7; CO 7:266; CO 51:192; also 4.1.3; CO 2:748; Comm. *Ephesians*. 4:10, p.277; Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 12:4, p.398.

<sup>82</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 12:8, p.401; also Comm. *Exodus*. 18:13, p.17.

<sup>83</sup> Elbert, "Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts", p.238.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p.241.



consequence. For Calvin, the communion and communication of the saints are not wholly realized only through the simple distribution of the different gifts of the Spirit, but by the use of various offices following these gifts.<sup>85</sup> In light of this, Wendel stresses that ‘the diversity of ministries is founded upon the corresponding diversity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit’.<sup>86</sup> As noted in his theological anthropological discussion of Paul’s metaphor of the body, Calvin suggests that the gifts of the Spirit should be designed and utilised for the common good of the church, through the various offices.<sup>87</sup> As he states:

The natural order...is this – that gifts come before the office to be discharged. As...he [Paul] has taught...that everything that an individual has received from God, should be made subservient to the common good [*in medium*], so now he declares that offices are distributed in such a manner, that all may together, by united efforts, edify the Church, and each individual according to his measure.<sup>88</sup>

It will be useful now to consider the way in which Calvin’s ideas on the common good of the church are embodied within the context of the gift giving of the Spirit, and what precisely he means by his use of this language. Again, two points can be made to flesh this out.

First of all, it is notable that Calvin’s conception of the common good of the church bears a deep interconnectedness with his definition of the term ‘edification’. He defines ‘the first place of edification’ as follows: ‘let everyone, according to he has been endowed with some particular gift, make it his aim to lay it out for the *advantage of all*’.<sup>89</sup> In other words, according to Calvin’s conceptualization, the edification of the church is grounded in the Christian life of self-control to establish the economic order of gifts for the good of all people. Here, Calvin’s term ‘all [people]’ can be interpreted as referring to all those who received a particular gift.<sup>90</sup> Thus, for Calvin, the most appropriate term to express the concept of the common good of the church is ‘edification’. Thus, one can see that his continued emphasis on ‘edification’ functions as an important cornerstone for the

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<sup>85</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 12:1, p.395; CO 39:496.

<sup>86</sup> Wendel, *Calvin*, 303. With regard to the Christological implications of the gifts of the Spirit and the ministry of the Church, see Leonard Sweetman, Jr., “The Gifts of the Spirit” in *Exploring the Heritage of John Calvin*, ed. David Holwerda (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), pp.274-84. The communal perspective of church offices will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

<sup>87</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 12:27, p.413.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:27, p.414.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 14:26, p.458.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 14:26, p.458.

architecture of his theology of the common good. According to Stevenson, the chief examples of the various forms of edification are, the constructive and coherent teaching of church doctrine, basic education, fellowship to keep the unity of peace, and the physical health and strength of both the visible church (such as the release of religious prisoners or the training of pastors) and the poor and dispossessed within and without Calvin's Geneva.<sup>91</sup> Stevenson's multiple analysis of Calvin's term 'edification' as spiritual, psychical, and physical growth, as briefly mentioned in Chapter Three, is a useful tool for understanding more concretely how Calvin perceives the common good both at a spiritual and physical level. In addition, Calvin always premises a Christ-centred communal anthropology when he uses this term 'edification': 'for we are not a mere civil society, but, being ingrafted into Christ's body, are truly members of one another'.<sup>92</sup>

Secondly, Calvin uses the language of the common good of the church to point to the principle of using well the gifts of the Spirit, with pragmatic wisdom, rather than neglecting or flaunting them with ostentation, ambition, and misdirected emulation.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, Calvin discusses the contribution of 'all gifts to the common advantage' in the context of the common good of the church. He believes that the church does not support the principle of isolated self-sufficiency<sup>94</sup> but rather supports mutual aid based upon God's economy.<sup>95</sup>

So far, it has been confirmed that the language Calvin uses to discuss the communal value within his theology of gift giving is deeply indebted to Paul's doctrine of the church as an organic living being. How, then, does Calvin make use of this principle of public value in the church as the standard by which one may determine the value and importance of the various gifts of the Spirit in God's economic order? One may perhaps consider Calvin's comparison of the gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues as a helpful case study to show his understanding of the gifts of the Spirit for the communal benefit of the church.

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<sup>91</sup> Stevenson, *Sovereign Grace*, pp.74-75.

<sup>92</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians* 12:27, p.412.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 12:7; 12:15, 17, 27, pp.409, 412.

<sup>94</sup> CO 51:534, *Sermons on Ephesians*. 4:6-8, 'None of us should presume to have all the skills and gifts we need...the person who has received more gifts and talents is under a greater obligation to put these gifts to work for the common good of the church [*pour le profit commun de l'Eglise*]...it is through Christ that we have these gifts'. [My translation.]

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 12:11, p.404.

It is important to begin by considering Calvin's understanding of prophecy as a communal gift. In his commentary on Acts, he distinguishes between 'prophecy as foretelling' and 'prophecy as edification'.<sup>96</sup> Although Calvin admits the communal value included in the 'wonderful graces' (*admirabilis gratias*) of foretelling by its adoration of the gospel in the early setting of the church,<sup>97</sup> he places more emphasis on the gift of *forth-telling*, by which he means the ability to understand, expound, and teach the biblical message.<sup>98</sup> For, in Calvin's mind, although the miraculous foretelling prophecy initially may contribute to the up-building of the church, forth-telling within prophecy may contribute continuously to the church even after its establishment and is therefore of more benefit to the community.

It is of interest to consider Calvin's understanding of another gift of the Spirit, that is, the gift of speaking in tongues, and the four characteristics of the communal value of this gift. First, Calvin appraises the gift of speaking in tongues in terms of its public value as a means of mutual communication. Thus, Calvin describes the gift of 'tongues without rational understanding' as 'a treasure hid in the earth' and therefore lacking any sense of communicability, compared with the understandable gift of prophecy, which he believed was 'profitable to all'.<sup>99</sup> Secondly, the gift of tongues is not given to foster believers' self-centredness, exultation, empty ambition, vanity, or ostentation, but to cultivate their communal life through voluntary abstention and public usefulness.<sup>100</sup> Calvin therefore believes that it has been designed as 'the end of edification' and 'for the good of all'.<sup>101</sup> Thirdly, for Calvin, the principle of love is the most important thing for the public use of all visible gifts: 'love is the only rule of the gifts of God'.<sup>102</sup> For, 'everyone derives advantage from his own faith and hope, but love extends its benefits to others'.<sup>103</sup> When God's 'admirable gift' is united with 'love', rather than with 'ambition', people can unmask the inner selfishness hidden within the mutual giving of external gifts and instead,

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<sup>96</sup> Comm. *Acts*. 15:32; CO 48:365; CC 7:58.

<sup>97</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 12:6, p.269, (CNTC); CC 8:269; Cf. Comm. *Acts* 11:27; CO 48:263-4; CC 6:333; Comm. *Acts*. 21:9; CO 48:478; CC 7:194-5.

<sup>98</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 12:6, p.269, (CNTC); CC 8:269; Comm. *Acts* 15:32; CO 48:365; CC 7:58.

<sup>99</sup> See Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 14:3, 14, 22.

<sup>100</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 14:19, p.450; 12:31, p.417; Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 14:30, pp.272-73, (CNTC).

<sup>101</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 14:4, pp.286-87, (CNTC).

<sup>102</sup> Comm. *1 Corinthians*. 13:3, p.421.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 13:13, p.432.

can rediscover a ‘true generosity’ within themselves.<sup>104</sup> Finally, Calvin believes that the sharing of the gospel and the establishment and development of the Church – its ‘general edification’ [*in communem ecclesiae adificationem*]’ – are the most important public values in his understanding of the gift of speaking in tongues.<sup>105</sup> According to Calvin, the special gifts, which God initially distributed at the beginning of the Gospel, have long ceased since they have been abused by ambitious people to advance their own personal ends instead of the original divine intention, which was the common good of the church.<sup>106</sup> From this viewpoint, Calvin criticizes both the ‘papists’ and the ‘fanatics’ for their wrong use of the gift of tongues, and for their breaking away from edifying the true Church.<sup>107</sup> In conclusion, one can therefore say that Calvin’s focus on this communal or public value of the gifts of the Spirit is located within the context of his doctrine of the cessation of all supernatural and miraculous gifts as ‘the channels of God’s goodness to us [humanity]’.<sup>108</sup>

Thus, to summarize, in order to present the ecclesial dimension of Calvin’s ideas on the common good, it is fruitful to investigate the Church as the body of Christ and the gift giving of the Spirit for the edification of the Church. What, then, does Calvin say about believers’ participation in realizing the value of the common good in the church? In order to investigate this question, there will now be a discussion of Calvin’s writings on prayer and sacrament, the public office, and common property in the church.

### **5.3. Prayer and Sacrament for the common good of the church**

This section explores the implications of Calvin’s theology of prayer and sacrament for the common good of the church. It will examine several of Calvin’s writings, and attempt to uncover his understanding of prayer, baptism, and Eucharist; in particular, how these affect his theology of the common good. It will be argued that Calvin makes a theological connection between the role of the common good in his Christology and the role of the common good in his ecclesiology, which guides his theology of prayer, baptism, and Eucharist.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 13:1,3, pp.419-20.

<sup>105</sup> Comm. Acts. 19:2, p.148, (CNTC); CO 48:440; CC 7:148; Langstaff, “Temporary Gifts”, p.185.

<sup>106</sup> Comm. Acts. 10:46, p.318, (CNTC).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 10:44, p.317, (CNTC).

<sup>108</sup> Comm. 1 Corinthians 12: 9-10, p.262-3, (CNTC); Langstaff, “Temporary Gifts”, p.185.

It is important to investigate Calvin's theology of prayer from the perspective of the common good. For Calvin, believers' prayers must not be self-centred or individual-oriented; instead, they should choose 'to direct their concern to the whole body of the Church'.<sup>109</sup> Thus, as Wallace summarizes, for Calvin, believers' prayer 'arising out of [their] personal sorrows, like those of David in the Psalms, will inevitably pass into intercession for the Church in all its afflictions'.<sup>110</sup> In addition, for Calvin, believers' intercession for the Church is 'an echo of the continued intercession of Christ', which is manifested by the work of the Spirit when all believers pray 'in common', 'for the whole body', by laying aside all their selfish personal considerations and clothing themselves 'with a public character'.<sup>111</sup> It is therefore important to examine how Christ's intercession, as the original 'sound' from which this 'echo' arises, is actually delivered to the believers' communal prayer.

For Calvin, God the Father, as the object of believers' prayer, both possesses 'the heavenly treasures' and is 'the Master and bestower of all good things'.<sup>112</sup> Through the prayer of believers united with Christ, all misery is replaced with divine happiness, and all neediness with divine wealth.<sup>113</sup> According to Calvin, the correct principle of prayer is that believers who are 'destitute and devoid of all good things' may make a petition to Christ, who is 'an overflowing spring', for what is necessary 'for ourselves and for our benefit'.<sup>114</sup> Thus, Christ is portrayed by Calvin not only as the mediating messenger of divine grace but also as the one who actively calls believers as participators in His community-centred

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<sup>109</sup> Comm. *Psalms* 14:7; CO 31:142; Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.288; CO 51:57, *Sermons on Galatians*, 5:22-26, 'Because if we sincerely pray for all those who need it and then when God gives them all they need to have a prosperous existence, we are angered by this, we demonstrate that our prayers were hypocritical and false. If God gives the good things of his Holy Spirit to a few, it is for the common good and the building up of His Church [*Si Dieu aussi distribue des graces de son saint Esprit a quelques uns, c'est pour le bien commun et edification de son Eglise*]. Therefore, all in all, there will be grounds to rejoice when we are really as the will of God wants us to be, at the same time, we will be glad to see our fellow people prospering', [my translation]; CO 51:851, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 6:19-24, 'To keep the Church in its current form and to keep it united, God must give gifts to those who teach and we must pray for them. Each person who does this [pray] does themselves good and safeguards their salvation. If we neglect this, it is a sign that we do not see either our spiritual life or the common good of the Church as a whole [*bien commun de toute la Eglise*] as being important'. [My translation.]

<sup>110</sup> Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.288; Comm. *Psalms* 25:22; CO 31:262.

<sup>111</sup> Wallace, p.289; Comm. *Acts* 1:14; CO 48:17; Comm. *Psalms* 79:6; CO 31:749-50.

<sup>112</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 3, p.92; also 3.20.2. p.851.

<sup>113</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 3, p.92; 3.20.1.

<sup>114</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 3, pp.92-93.

mediating ministry, shown in his reference to the prayer of David, a prototype of the Son of God.<sup>115</sup>

Moreover, for Calvin, Christ's model of community-centred prayer and Christ's entrusting of 'the vital task of interceding for the Church and Kingdom'<sup>116</sup> to believers is activated by the Spirit through believers' community-oriented petition for 'the common good of all',<sup>117</sup> according to Christ's command to treat their neighbours as they themselves would want to be treated.<sup>118</sup> This form of active prayer is significant for understanding Calvin's viewpoint on prayer as an instrument of mutual fellowship for the establishment of the common good of the church.<sup>119</sup>

Likewise, for Calvin, it appears that believers' union with Christ is the ontological basis for the communal and outward-looking focus of his theology of prayer.<sup>120</sup> Christ the mediator unites believers' prayers with each other *and* with His prayer in the mode of willingly-given, free, and fostering love.<sup>121</sup> In a similar vein, Biéler stresses that, in Calvin's mind, 'the fellowship of the church particularly in prayer' activates and realizes 'a genuine anthropology', entitled 'the new man created in Christ'.<sup>122</sup> Thus, one can see that Calvin's theology of shared prayer is closely interwoven with his theology of the common good of the church; both are built upon his view of sanctification, which is based upon the concept of double grace in Christ.<sup>123</sup> In a similar manner, Calvin's refutation of

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<sup>115</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 28:9, pp.473-74; CO 31:285-6.

<sup>116</sup> Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.288; Comm. *Psalms*. p.51:20; CO 31:523; *Sermon on Deuteronomy*. 9:13-14; CO 26:682-3; CO 26:682-3.

<sup>117</sup> Comm. *Hebrews*. 13:19, p.355.

<sup>118</sup> Hesselink, "Calvin's Catechism of 1538" in *Calvin's First Catechism*, p.33; *Inst.* 1536, Ch 1, 12, pp.29-30.

<sup>119</sup> 3.20.5. p.825; Comm. *Romans*. 8:16; Comm. *Acts*. 1:14; Billings, "Participation", p.143, 149-150; 3.20.1. Regarding Calvin's thought on the Trinitarian mode of prayer, see Partee, *Calvin*, p.237. Billings also stresses that in Calvin's mind, prayer can be represented according to the Trinitarian-structured experience ("Participation", pp.141-43).

<sup>120</sup> 3.20.28-29; Partee, *Calvin*, p.238.

<sup>121</sup> 3.20.24. p.883. David Calhoun stresses that 'for Calvin, the prayer of believers are not "purely therapeutic"; they in some real way affect God and they help other people'. See David Calhoun, "Prayer: The Chief Exercise of Faith", in *Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes*, ed. David Hall (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), p.352. See also 3.20.19. pp.876-77; 3.20.17. p.875.

<sup>122</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.182; 3.20.1.

<sup>123</sup> 3.7.5. Ray Petry notes that 'public prayer lent itself particularly to the re-enforcement of the sanctified body in the active common life'. See "Calvin's Conception of the *Communio Sanctorum*", *CH* 5.3 (1936), p.232.

the Roman Church's doctrine of the church's common property is closely interwoven with his view of justification, which is based upon the same concept of double grace.<sup>124</sup>

Calvin's theology of prayer should therefore be understood as Christ-centred and church-centred. For Calvin, public prayer is officially appointed prayer that occurs in designated public places, called 'temples',<sup>125</sup> which are designed to promote fellowship amongst God's people.<sup>126</sup> Public prayer, as in the case of the Sabbath, is established 'according to the polity agreed upon by common consent (*communi consensus*) among all'.<sup>127</sup> Thus, the officially appointed times of public prayer are 'indifferent to God but necessary for men's convenience, [and] are agreed upon and appointed to provide for the accommodation of all, and for everything to be done "decently and in order" in the church'.<sup>128</sup> In light of this, Calvin does not claim 'any secret sanctity' or mystical aspects for these places that would 'make prayer more holy'.<sup>129</sup> Rather, for Calvin, the solidarity found in public prayer is an effective way of directing lethargic believers engrossed in their own prosperity towards a more active and philanthropic prayer that is aimed towards interceding for their companions who are affected by 'varied and heavy afflictions'.<sup>130</sup>

Moreover, Calvin suggests that public prayer can benefit the whole church, not only by its mutual confession of faith and mutual prayer (*mutual confessionem et mutuam orationem*), but also by its mutual confession of sins (*mutuo confiteamur*).<sup>131</sup> Within this context of public prayer, Calvin specifically mentions public fasting for the open and mutual confession of sins, and clearly suggests its communal implications for the benefit of the whole church.<sup>132</sup> According to Calvin, fasting has three purposes: the first – 'to weaken and subdue the flesh' – is suitable only for 'private fasting', and the second is acceptable for both the public and private prayer, since it involves the preparation 'for

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<sup>124</sup> 3.5.3; CO 4:163. As Stanford Reid notes, for Calvin, though justification is very different from 'the gift of newness of life', it is 'a stimulus to good works', and, moreover, believers and their good works constantly need the justifying grace of God in Christ, unlike the Roman Catholic doctrine of meritorious good works. See "Justification by faith according to John Calvin" in *An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*, pp.216-18.

<sup>125</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 3, 99; OS 1:102.

<sup>126</sup> 3.20.30. p.893.

<sup>127</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 3, p.99; 3.20.29. p.891.

<sup>128</sup> 3.20.29. p.891.

<sup>129</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 3. p.99.

<sup>130</sup> *Comm. Ephesians.* 6:18, p.341; CO 51:237; 3.20.29. p.892.

<sup>131</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 5, 20, p.186; OS 1:177; 4.12.14. p.1241.

<sup>132</sup> 4.12.15. p.1242.

prayers and holy meditation'.<sup>133</sup> The third purpose of public fasting is to lead all people from common affliction that is the 'common scourge', such as war, pestilence, and calamity, to common restoration by the communal confession of common sin.<sup>134</sup> One can say that the third purpose of fasting is the most crucial for Calvin from his perspective of the common good of the whole church.

In particular, Calvin believes that public prayer can be 'for the edification of the whole church' (*in totius ecclesiae aedificationem*) only when believers choose and use a shared and common language.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, Calvin criticizes the Roman Church's practice of prayer in Latin, which was an unknown language to believers in Sixteenth Century Europe, and therefore rendered the public prayer improper nonsense in terms of its original purpose for the common benefit of the church.<sup>136</sup> For Calvin, the language of public prayer should contribute to the good of the whole church, not by excluding believers' distinctive and particular prayers but by framing them within a context of 'public concern and common affection' (*publico animo*).<sup>137</sup> As he explains:

To sum up, all prayers ought to be such as to look to that community which our Lord has established in his kingdom and his household. Nevertheless, this does not prevent us from praying especially for ourselves and for certain others, provided, however, our minds do not withdraw their attention from this community or turn aside from it but refer all things to it. For although prayers are individually framed, since they are directed to this end they do not cease to be common...There is a general command of God's to relieve the need of all the poor. This...is done through that general form of prayer wherein all children of God are included, among whom they also are.<sup>138</sup>

Through analysis of Calvin's understanding of the double structure in the Lord's Prayer, one can find a useful case study for illustrating this point that prayer contributes to his theology of the common good. According to Calvin, the three petitions in the first half

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<sup>133</sup> 4.12.15. p.1242.

<sup>134</sup> 4.12.15. p.1242.

<sup>135</sup> 3.20.33. p.896; *Inst.* 1536, Ch 3. 12, p.101.

<sup>136</sup> *Comm. 1 Corinthians*. 14:14-16.

<sup>137</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 3.15, pp.105-6. Calvin stresses that all believers ought to pray 'with a special affection' for the for the benefit of both themselves and the community as a whole: 'For although prayers are individually framed, since they are directed to this end, they do not cease to be common' (3.20.39. pp.901-2) (*elles ne laissent d'estre communes* (F), p.382; *communes esse non desinunt* (L), p.349).

<sup>138</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 3.15, pp.105-6; OS 1:107.



of the Lord's Prayer constitute a prayer for 'God's glory', and the three petitions in the second half make up a prayer for 'our own advantage, interest, and benefit'.<sup>139</sup>

In Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Prayer, the most crucial theological premise in establishing the value of the common good of the church is his comprehension of God as 'Our Father'. As he states, 'each one of us should individually call him *his Father*, but rather that all of us in common should call him *our Father*'.<sup>140</sup> According to Calvin, Christ is 'the pledge and guarantee' of the adoption of the divine family and the Holy Spirit is its 'witness'.<sup>141</sup> The believer's new self-identity, not as an isolated individual but as a communal member, is given to him or her in the divine family established through God's Trinitarian work. In light of this new Trinitarian anthropological mode, Calvin suggests the identity of prayer as the best mode of communal love. As he teaches: 'here is nothing in which we can benefit our brethren more than in commending them to the providential care of the best of fathers...Let the Christian man, then, conform his prayers to this rule in order that they may be in common and embrace all who are his brothers in Christ.'<sup>142</sup>

In other words, for Calvin, believers' common understanding of 'Our Father' focuses upon the mission to achieve a great 'feeling of brotherly love' and a sharing of 'special affection'.<sup>143</sup> This common good-oriented value of the Lord's Prayer is more clearly manifested in the conclusion of its second half, 'in which we especially commend to God ourselves and all our possessions'.<sup>144</sup> As he states,

The prayers of Christians ought to be public, and to look to the public edification of the church and the advancement of the believers' fellowship...but all of us in common ask for our bread, forgiveness of sins, not to be led into temptation, and to be freed from evil.<sup>145</sup>

To sum up, one can see that Calvin understands prayer in general, and the Lord's Prayer in particular, as manifesting both spiritual communication and physical sharing for the common good of the church. How does this compare to his understanding of the sacraments?

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<sup>139</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, on Prayer, pp.74-75; 3.20.35. p.898.

<sup>140</sup> 3.20.38. p.901; OS 4:348.

<sup>141</sup> 3.20.37.

<sup>142</sup> 3.20.38. p.901.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> 3.20.47. p.915.

<sup>145</sup> 3.20.47. p.915; CO 364.

With regard to the sacraments, Calvin recognizes only two as being genuine and providing double grace; baptism, that is, the sacrament of justification, and the Eucharist, that is, the sacrament of sanctification.<sup>146</sup> Calvin envisages baptism as ‘an initiation’ into the house of God, and the Last Supper as ‘continual’ ‘spiritual’ food for the household.<sup>147</sup> Calvin also recognizes that the sacraments, as ‘mirrors in which we may contemplate the riches of God’s grace’, must be ‘messengers’ to reveal visibly ‘God’s good will toward us’ and the ‘varied and distinct graces of God’.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, according to Calvin’s doctrine of human knowledge of God, believers’ ‘complete happiness in God’, arising from their recognition of God as ‘the Author of their every good’ (*omnium bonorum...autorum*) and the giving of ‘God’s good will’ and of being ‘nourished by his fatherly care’, may ‘truly and sincerely’ restore the ‘willing service’ (*voluntaria observantia*) of the pious Adam before the Fall and may direct believers to be grateful to God and others.<sup>149</sup> This then becomes the ground for the food of the communal life.<sup>150</sup> In light of this, as Robert Godfrey points out, ‘The sacraments were not an academic wrangling point for Calvin. They were vital to the well-being of the faithful’.<sup>151</sup>

Given the above discussion, it will be helpful to examine in more detail Calvin’s theology of baptism from his perspective of the common good of the church. For Calvin, baptism is a public event and the mark by which believers publicly profess their faith, an event in which humanity, who were ‘strangers and aliens’ to the community of God, finally become God’s family through their being ‘engrafted in Christ’.<sup>152</sup>

In order to secure objectively the communal effects of baptism, Calvin focuses here upon the baptism of Christ. For Calvin, Christ’s baptism is not designed for His own profit, but ‘he [Christ] might have it in common with us as the firmest bond of the union and fellowship’.<sup>153</sup> Through the common ground of baptism, ‘which the whole church shares

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<sup>146</sup> Partee, *Calvin*, pp.273, 288.

<sup>147</sup> 4.18.19. p.1446; 4.15.1. p.1303.

<sup>148</sup> 4.14.6; *Inst.* 1536, Ch 4. 7, p.124.

<sup>149</sup> 1.2.1; CO 2:34.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*; 4.14.1. p.1277; Billings, “Participation”, p.153.

<sup>151</sup> W. Robert Godfrey, “Calvin, Worship and the Sacrament” in *Theological Guide to Calvin’s Institutes*, ed. David Hall and Peter Lillback (New Jersey: P&R Publishing., 2008), p.372.

<sup>152</sup> Calvin’s Letter Vol. 2, *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, of the Sacraments, p.86; 4.15.1. p.1303; *Inst.* 1536, Ch4.20, p.133; John Hesselink, *Calvin’s First Catechism*, p.34; 4.15.5, p.11; See Comm. *Colossians*. 2:12.

<sup>153</sup> 4.15.6. pp.1307-8.

in common with Christ, himself baptised in the Jordan', this union is objectively and firmly established between Christ and Christians.<sup>154</sup> Developing this theme, Billings notes that 'the language of ingrafting [in Calvin's theology of Baptism] takes place on both levels: into Christ and into the church'.<sup>155</sup> In a similar vein, Biéler emphasizes that for Calvin, baptism is the visible sign of the spiritual reality that calls believers not as individuals but as social beings.<sup>156</sup>

It will now be of value to examine Calvin's theology of the Eucharist from his perspective of the common good of the church. For Calvin, the Eucharist is 'the life-giving bread' and 'a spiritual banquet', with which God the Heavenly Father, as 'a provident householder', nourishes the children of His divine family.<sup>157</sup> Here, Christ, as 'the only food of our soul', provides believers with His own body, 'really (*realiter*) and truly (*vere*)', by taking a common nature with humanity through the Spirit.<sup>158</sup> Here, the 'wonderful exchange' (*Mirifica commutatio*) occurs between Christ's 'wealth' and humanity's 'poverty'.<sup>159</sup> Union with Christ is regarded as the special fruit of the Eucharist through His Spirit, who is 'the bond of this connection' like 'a channel' and 'its [the sun's] beam'.<sup>160</sup> As Thomas Davis stresses, Calvin's definition of being Christian lies in being united with Christ, and Calvin explains the mystery of this union with Christ in terms of the sacrament of the Last Supper.<sup>161</sup> In addition, Calvin goes on to articulate that the Eucharist is the spiritual sign that reflects the union and the sharing of mutual love among believers, who are 'the mixed grains' combining to form the bread and therefore the body of Christ.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> 4.15.6. pp.1307-8; see also Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism*, p.34; Ronald Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), p.175.

<sup>155</sup> Billings, "Participation", p.158

<sup>156</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.238

<sup>157</sup> 4.17.1. p.1360; Calvin, "Catechism of the Church of Geneva", in *Tracts and Letters*, Vol 2, ed. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), p.86.

<sup>158</sup> 4.17.1. p.1360; *Inst.* 1536, Ch 4.25, p.140; OS 1:137; Partee, *Calvin*, p.279; *Westphal*, 2:281. As Christopher Elwood notes, Calvin's sacrament and sacramental elements, such as the bread and wine, are visible and corporeal signs (*signum*). These sacramental signs convey the invisible and incorporeal substance (*res*) signified, that is, 'the whole Christ and all Christ's benefit to faithful communicants' in a distinctive but connective way. Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.61-71.

<sup>159</sup> 4.17.2.

<sup>160</sup> 4.17.12. p.1373.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas Davis, *The Clearest Promises of God: The Development of Calvin's Eucharistic Teaching*, (New York: AMS Press, 1995), pp.202-217; Partee, *Calvin*, p.276.

<sup>162</sup> 4.17.38. pp.1414-5. Keith Mathison, *Given For You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*, (Philipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing), pp.41-42.

Making use of Augustine's definition of the Eucharist as 'the bond of love' (*caritatis vinculum*), Calvin stresses that Christ, as the spiritual nutriment, is regarded not only as the model of the shared gift among believers but also as a common gift given to all believers.<sup>163</sup> As he states, 'When Christ, giving himself to us, not only invites us by his own example to pledge and give ourselves to one another, but inasmuch as he makes himself common to all, also makes all of us one in himself'.<sup>164</sup> According to Billings, Calvin has in mind that believers' unity in 'a common meal because of the common food for their souls' provided in Christ can be regarded as the restored 'tasting of the primal human communion which has been disrupted by sin'.<sup>165</sup>

With this theological background in mind, Calvin gives historical examples by saying that it was an ancient custom for believers to 'kiss one another and offer alms at the altar' before taking the Eucharist: 'thus they declared their love first symbolically, then by their beneficence. The deacon, who was the steward of the poor, received what was given in order to distribute it'.<sup>166</sup> As the Eucharist is, for Calvin, the means of communicating the gratitude existing among believers towards God,<sup>167</sup> so it cannot be a unilateral and obligatory gift-giving system but instead is a mutual and voluntary gift-sharing system.<sup>168</sup> In addition, as Billings notes, Calvin gives attention not merely to the internal focus of the Eucharist *within* the Church, but also to the inevitable movement of redemption 'toward the hurts and needs of the broader society'.<sup>169</sup> Thus, the Eucharist can be understood as 'a feast of fellowship' used as 'a spur to practical Christian living' and 'an incentive to the cultivation of unity and brotherly love'.<sup>170</sup>

However, turning back to the Mass of the Roman Church, its sacrifice is, for Calvin, far removed from the original purpose of the Eucharist; that is, promoting the *true*

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<sup>163</sup> 4.17.38. p.1415; OS 1:145.

<sup>164</sup> 4.17.38. pp.1415-6; *Inst.* 1536, Ch 4. 34, p.149.

<sup>165</sup> Billings, p.226; Comm. *Psalms* 8:5-7; CO 31:92. See 4.17.42.

<sup>166</sup> 4.5.15. p.1098.

<sup>167</sup> Regarding the Supper as the Gratitude, see Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, pp.145-56.

<sup>168</sup> Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism*, pp.34-35.

<sup>169</sup> Billings, p.227; OS 2:41-42; McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving*, (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1984), p.50; Wallace, *Word and Sacrament*, pp.215-6; 4.17.44; *Sermon on 1 Corinthians*. 10:15-18, CO 49:668; Eugene Osterhaven, "Eating and Drinking Christ: The Lord's Supper as an Act of Worship in the Theology and Practice of Calvin" *RR* 37 (1983-1984), pp.89-91.

<sup>170</sup> Wallace, *Word and Sacrament*, p.241; 4.14.19; OS 1:511; 1:413; 4.18.16; Comm. *Hebrews* 13:16, p.351; CO 55:194.

common good of the church.<sup>171</sup> In Calvin's eyes, the Roman Mass is a private mass limited only to a few priests performing 'sacrifice on the people's behalf'; it therefore compromises the original purpose of the Eucharist, that is, as a sacramental gift to be shared amongst all believers 'in the public assembly of the church'.<sup>172</sup> Moreover, for Calvin, it is wrong for the Mass both to offer oblation to God in order to obtain atonement and to sell and exchange spiritual food with the meritorious offering of believers, since it is the *free* gift of grace in Christ.<sup>173</sup> Calvin stresses that 'men saw themselves openly and undisguisedly held up to ridicule by the pope and his bull-bearers, their souls' salvation the object of lucrative trafficking, the price of salvation reckoned at a few coins, nothing offered free of charge'.<sup>174</sup> Accordingly, for Calvin, the Eucharist is not an offering of the human giver but a divine gift, 'which ought to have been received with thanksgiving'; as he states, 'there is as much difference between this sacrifice and the sacrament as there is between giving and receiving'.<sup>175</sup> Calvin thus wanted to restore the common good of the church, not through commerce but through grace.

This understanding of the Eucharist can be seen in Calvin's discussion of Simon the Magician in his commentary on Acts 8:18-21. Although Calvin does not directly link his analysis on this magician's 'hypocrisy' with the Eucharist, a close investigation of his statement regarding this story of Simon's wrong use of the gifts of the Spirit demonstrates that a similar comparison between grace and commerce is implied between Simon's case and the Eucharist. According to Calvin, this magician believes that both 'the grace of God' and its 'estimable gifts of the Spirit' can be bought with 'money' through 'buying and selling'. This notion of gifts as commercial products stands in opposition to Christians' right use of the gifts of God's grace for the brethren's life and 'the common good of the Church'.

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<sup>171</sup> According to Davis, since the Catholic system, particularly the mass as sacrifice, was 'a model of close gift reciprocity between humans and God the Father', to Protestants, this mass seemed 'to oblige the Lord by a gift'. So, Calvin replaced the Catholic's reciprocal apparatus of 'gift and obligation' with the new (mutual) apparatus of 'free gift' and 'gratuitousness', represented by the unilateral flow both 'downward' from God and 'outward' from believers, not leading to a mutual obligation within 'a patterned structure' but 'left free and uncharted with their gifts' (*The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, pp.101-120).

<sup>172</sup> 4.18.7-8. pp.1435-6.

<sup>173</sup> 4.18.14. p.1442.

<sup>174</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 5.32, pp.200-201.

<sup>175</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 4.47, p.160; also Ch 5.34, p.202; 33, p.201; *Inst.* 1536, Ch 4.48, p.160; Billings, "Participation", p.228.

To summarize, for Calvin, public prayer and the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist are carried out for the benefit of the church. They are not limited merely to enhancing believers' service to God but also by necessity embrace the divine directive to practice charity both within and outwith the Church community. Thus, the worship of faith and the charity of love are *both* tightly connected with each other within prayer, baptism, and the Eucharist.<sup>176</sup> In this light, Pattison argues that Calvin sees no meritorious value for salvation in the splendour and luxury of the Roman Mass; instead, he recognizes the gift giving of the wealthy to the poor within the simplicity of spiritual worship, such as the Eucharist, as the appropriate response to divine award. Pattison's thoughts on this topic reflect those of Biéler, who identifies Calvin's understanding of solidarity amongst believers as the channel for their gratitude to God.<sup>177</sup> Biéler stresses that, for Calvin, since the gift giving of the rich to the poor arises from the giver's gratitude to a gracious God, such gifts have no meritorious value to the gift giver.<sup>178</sup> However, from the discussion above, one can perceive that, whilst Biéler and Pattison are correct in their analysis, Calvin *also* recognizes that the principal motivation for the charitable characteristics of the Eucharist is fundamentally placed in the context of the good of the whole church. He therefore argues that the value of meritorious work for the salvation of individual givers in the Mass should be completely denied, and instead, the value of the gracious work of communal sharers within the Eucharist should be taken as a reflection of and response to Christ's work for the common good. Thus, Calvin emphasizes that spiritual worship, including prayer and Sacrament, receives Christ as the common gift for all believers in the love based upon the correct response to God's gift of grace. Moreover, believers mutually share this gift through the communication of the Spirit according to the model of Christ and, therefore, ultimately contribute to the common good of the church.

#### **5.4. Office and Property for the common good of the church**

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<sup>176</sup> Pattison discusses the location of almsgiving in worship in Calvin's theology. See *Poverty*, pp.287, 309-310. Also, McKee stresses that both spiritual worship and almsgiving are in common founded upon the *caritas* flowing from the *fides* by citing Calvin's thought on 'the duties of brotherly love' (*fraternae caritatis officia*) as the supreme visible manifestation of believers' sincerity to the worship of God. See McKee, *Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving*, p.255; also introduction of Comm. *Matthew*. 23:23-28 / Comm. *Luke*. 11:42-44; Pattison, *Poverty*, p.313.

<sup>177</sup> Pattison, *Poverty*, p.311.

<sup>178</sup> Biéler, *Pensée Économique*, p.325; Comm. *Luke*. 11:37-40, pp.160-62; CO 45:392-93; Pattison, *Poverty*, p.311.

The final section of this chapter explores Calvin's communal understanding of ecclesial offices and property. How does his perception of these contribute to the relationship between his theory and practice of the common good in the Church of Geneva? Moreover, how does this relate to his critique of both Catholic and Anabaptist theology of church office and property?

Calvin's doctrine of human nature and condition as ignorant and slothful seems to demand the necessity of the Church as providing public and organized forms of 'outward helps',<sup>179</sup> which enable believers to overcome their own weakness 'in their public and organized gathering'.<sup>180</sup> Regarding this, Selderhuis argues that Calvin's 'static and rigid' image of the Church must be reconsidered in light of the dynamic image found in his Commentaries. This dynamic image is based upon Calvin's balance between strictness and gentleness in his pastoral practice.<sup>181</sup> For Calvin, office and service within the church, like ligaments working together to co-ordinate and sustain the human body, are a sustainable and dynamic means of realizing the united activity for the common good of the organic church. As he illustrates, 'Paul shows by these words that this human ministry which God uses to govern the church is the chief sinew [*praecipuum...nervum*] by which believers are held together in one body'.<sup>182</sup> The driving force behind these offices is the Holy Spirit, the endower of gifts.<sup>183</sup> Accordingly, ministers of the church who have received different gifts, despite working in different ministries, are engaged with a single mind in the same work: the construction of the church.<sup>184</sup> Thus, Christ set up the order of different offices in His Church so that members could work together in mutual love and fellowship for the benefit of the church community.<sup>185</sup> As Calvin explains regarding ministers:

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<sup>179</sup> 4.1.1. p.1011.

<sup>180</sup> Jung-Sook Lee, "Calvin's ministry in Geneva; Theology and Practice", in *John Calvin and Evangelical Theology*, ed. S. W. Jung (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), p.202.

<sup>181</sup> Herman J. Selderhuis, "Church on Stage: Calvin's Dynamic Ecclesiology", in *Calvin and the Church: Papers Presented at the 31th Colloquium of the Calvin Studies Society*, May 24-26, ed. David Foxgrover (Grand Rapids: CRC Product Services, 2002), pp.46, 63.

<sup>182</sup> 4.3.2. p.1055; CO 2:778; Höpel, *Polity*, p.116.

<sup>183</sup> 1.13.14; CO 2:102; Comm. *John* 20:22; CO 47:439.

<sup>184</sup> In addition to this, Calvin stresses that 'when it comes to appointing people to whatever post God has created in His Church for the common good [*Dieu ait constitue en son Eglise pour le bien commun*], these people must be examined and tested', [my translation], *Sermons on 1 Timothy*. 5:1-2, CO 53:452.

<sup>185</sup> Comm. *Ephesians*. 4:12; CO 51:199; CO 51:543.

They may be employed, with one accord, in building up the Church of God; for there is no greater hindrance than when everyone labours apart, and when all do not direct their exertions to the common good...there will be no building of a Church.<sup>186</sup>

Thus, according to Calvin, the construction of the church (*aedificatio ecclesiae*) must be considered as the ultimate goal of the polity of the church (*politica ecclesiae*). As Höpfl notes, Calvin stresses that ‘the true Christian can hardly view the disintegration, deformation and scattering of godly churches with indifference’.<sup>187</sup> In light of this, Calvin appears to believe that the constructive revolution of the church can only be attained by the operation of this polity ‘to preserve and adhere to those arrangements which aid [*aedificatio*] and prevent disintegration’, which are enacted for the common good of the church.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, he believed that the common good of the church is the sole means for the polity to establish the construction of the church. Thus, in his discussion of ecclesial offices in Book IV of the *Institutes* (1559), Calvin avoids ranking these offices and instead focuses on their collegial functions, clarifying Paul’s concept of ‘the common ministry’ among believers.<sup>189</sup> For Calvin, the church can be built as one body of Christ only by cooperative work between pastors and lay leaders within ‘plural ministry’, rather than by establishing any hierarchical order therein.<sup>190</sup> One can therefore say that Calvin’s participatory ecclesiology, in terms of the public function of offices, coincides with his theology of the common good of the church. In Calvin’s mind, the church’s ‘well-ordered arrangement’ is not irrelevant to ‘some [general] form of organization’, which is ‘necessary in all human society to foster the common peace’ and the ‘public decency’.<sup>191</sup> As Höpfl stresses, in order not to disintegrate, the offices as the sinews of the church must coexist with the Law of the church: this idea presumes ‘the striking parallelism between political and ecclesiological thought’, since, for Calvin, the Laws function as the ‘stoutest

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<sup>186</sup> Comm. *John*. 15:17, p.123; CO 47:349.

<sup>187</sup> Höpfl, *Polity*, p.39.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Billings, “Participation”, p.225.

<sup>190</sup> Comm. *John*. 21:15; CO 47:452; *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, 1541; Billings, p.226, n.615. Mackee expounds the characteristics of the Genevan church as the ‘plural ministry’ seeking mutual cooperation to serve better the people in Geneva. In Elsie Anne McKee, *Elders and Plural Ministry; the Role of Exegetical History in Illuminating John Calvin’s Theology*, (Geneva: Droz, 1988); and *Diakonia in the Classical Reformed Tradition and Today*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989). See Lee’s explanation on the ministry of collaboration, that is, parity and collegiality amongst offices, which is promoted in Geneva in “How Collegial Can They Be? Church Offices in the Korean Presbyterian Churches”, *TT* 66.2 (2009).

<sup>191</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 6.32, p.282.



sinews' not only in the church but also in the commonwealth. Moreover, the concord based upon the Law is the core value in common both to the building of the church and to the state.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, for Calvin, the public order of the church, 'as the kingdom of God in the world', must be a special model for public order in society; at the same time, public order in society can be understood as the partial shadow or reflection of the public order of the church.<sup>193</sup>

Keeping this in mind, the four church offices identified by Calvin will now be discussed in turn. The four offices which he regarded as permanent, on one hand, are pastor and doctor (teacher) as the priests' ministries for *pietas*, the love of the Lord, and on the other hand, elder and deacon as the lay ministries for *caritas*, the love of the neighbour. These will be considered in the context of their role within the following four institutions: the venerable company of pastors, the academy, the consistory, and the general hospital.<sup>194</sup>

According to Calvin, the 'primary' role of the pastor is to preserve the teaching of Christ for the glory of God and the spiritual welfare of believers 'with sound doctrine', according to the traditions of the early church.<sup>195</sup> Therefore, though they play no main part

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<sup>192</sup> Höpfl, *Polity*, pp.40, 50; 4.20.14; *Inst.* 1536, Ch 6, p.281.

<sup>193</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 6.32, pp.281-2; Höpfl, *Polity*, p.41; In light of this, Kingdon seems to overestimate the purpose of church discipline as being an 'effective tool for social and political order'. See Robert Kingdon, "Social Control and Political Control in Calvin's Geneva" *AR* (1993), p.523.

<sup>194</sup> 4.3.4; CO 2:779-780; OS 5:45-46; 4.3.8; CO 2:782; OS 5:50. McKee classifies the plural ministry of the four offices according to the *pietas* and *caritas* tradition (*Diakonia in the Classical Reformed Tradition and Today*, pp.28-31); also see Lee's summarization of 'the cooperative ministries' between the four offices and the four organizations, in "Calvin's Ministry in Geneva; Theology and Practice", in *John Calvin and Evangelical Theology*, pp.211-15.

<sup>195</sup> 4.8.1; 4.4.3; CO 49:614, *Sermons on 1 Corinthians* 1:7, 'If a man gets up in the pulpit to preach the Word of God and only explains the Holy Scriptures without paying any attention to what might be beneficial to all [*le profit commun*], those to whom he preaches, and is incapable of building these people up, his preaching is sterile and of little practical use...Those who are responsible for teaching should be aware when their congregation is being infected with some kind of evil or corruption', [my translation]. Regarding the recognition of the civil government of Geneva about the role of the pastor for the common good of the church, see the epistle of 'le sénat de Genève au sieur de Blacon' in 1562, CO 19:476, 'Noble and honourable Lord, the long absence of our faithful Minister and Pastor, Master Pierre Viret is having such a damaging effect on our church that we need him to return soon, although we see what a positive impact he has had in Lyons...we would like to be able to agree to your request, namely that he [Viret] stay there for two months, although he will naturally be free to act as he wishes according to what he judges to be useful for the common good [*utile pour le bien commun*], insofar as he is able to do so. We wish to accompany you here [Genève] and everywhere as much as possible in order for the true religion [*la vraie religion*] to be thus established and when God gives us the resources to work towards this goal even more, there will be no lack of desire to do so', [my translation]. With regard to the public

in ‘the ministry of tables’ for the physical welfare of the church,<sup>196</sup> the pastor, through ‘public worship’, contributes to the religious education of believers, guiding them towards salvation ‘step by step’.<sup>197</sup> For Calvin, ‘the apostolic and pastoral office’, entrusted by God for the distribution of His gifts, is more essential for the preservation of the eternal life of ‘the church on earth’ than ‘the food, drink, light and heat of the sun’ are necessary for the nourishment and sustainability of the present life of humankind.<sup>198</sup>

In order to help pastors effectively, Calvin organized a communal meeting for them, called ‘the venerable company of pastors’, in the Genevan Church. The purpose of this public meeting was to pursue ‘the purity and agreement of doctrine’ through the provision of continuing education, administrative cooperation, and the facilitation of self- and mutual evaluation for disciplinary purposes.<sup>199</sup> Regarding this, Parker stresses that, in Calvin’s mind, this company is considered the clearest case of mutual support among believers united in Christ, by their sharing of not only ‘the blessings and the virtues given for the common good’, but also the ‘faults and the weakness’ of ‘the other members of the body’.<sup>200</sup> Thus, one can say that Calvin recognizes the office of pastor as an organ of the

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value of the printing and distribution of pastor’s sermons, refer to *Notice Littéraire* of Calvin’s *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, CO 25:587-9, ‘Those who are going to reprint any work by the same Author should have in mind the general interest and the edification of the Church [*à l’utilité commune, et edification de l’Eglise*], rather than the promotion of their own interests (587-588)... there were some who could not hear the preaching of this good servant of God in person and who wished at least to be able to read what had been preached in public....we allowed the scribe to give out the copy of the sermon...so that everyone who received this copy could make the most of the doctrinal teachings therein...These originals will be printed whenever God decides to provide the resources needed to do so, for the common good of all [*pour le profit commun de tous*]’ (589), [my translation], the same object is written in *Notice Littéraire* of Calvin’s *Sermons of Daniel*, CO 41:319.

<sup>196</sup> 4.1.5. p.1019.

<sup>197</sup> Thus, Calvin clearly teaches that ‘the entire church of God is affected when Ministers are slandered and their lives are held in scorn. Why? Because, as a result, the doctrine of God no longer has the same majesty as it should have and as it deserves. In short, we are deprived of the greatest treasure God gives us in this world, that is, that our souls should be attracted to Him...he [St Paul] wanted none of the faithful to lose their salvation, he has procured the common good of the church [*il a procure le bien commun de l’Eglise*]’, [my translation], CO 53:517-518, *Sermons on 1 Timothy*. 5:17-20.

<sup>198</sup> 4.3.2.

<sup>199</sup> See “Ecclesial Ordinances”, 1541, in *the Registry of the Company of Pastors of Geneva*, ed. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1966), 37; Kingdon, “Calvin and ‘Presbytery’”, pp.47-53.

<sup>200</sup> Parker, *Calvin*, p.115.

Holy Spirit, necessary to deliver the gift of the Word of God<sup>201</sup> for the spiritual common welfare of the church<sup>202</sup> and the public order of society,<sup>203</sup> whilst also relinquishing any personal interest that may arise during his performance of this office.<sup>204</sup>

Now to turn to the office of teacher: for Calvin, the office of teacher as shared by the pastor, was at first intended for religious education; cultivating the faith of children and adults through the teaching of the Catechism and the Bible through the programme of parish instruction.<sup>205</sup> However, according to Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, after the establishment of the Geneva Academy, the teacher, as a more distinctive position, takes charge of civic education including humanities and languages. Thus, one can say that the office of teacher in Geneva, as a public educational institution, may contribute to the supply of church ministers and civil officers working together for the common good of church and state.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> CO 34:550, 'It [good doctrine and teaching] is in fact a gift from God. When God raises up a man in this way and gives him a greater portion of his Spirit, is it so this man can build up a good reputation for themselves? Is it not rather for the general edification of all [*pour l'utilité commune de tous*]? Whoever is blessed with several of God's great gifts has an even greater duty towards his fellow humans, and he must make use of the gifts he has been given, so that everyone can share in them'. [My translation.]

<sup>202</sup> Bruce Gordon states that 'a wide range of ministers' and 'the meetings of the Congregation' are to show 'the Genevan ideal of collective study of the scripture and recognition of the distribution of the gifts among the church'. See *Calvin*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p.129; CO 34:424, 'We should be well aware that those who have the responsibility of teaching, when they are speaking to a whole congregation, must decide which doctrine will be most useful to teach and then teach it faithfully and wisely, in such a way that it be to the general edification of all [*l'utilité commune de tous*]. If we don't do this, we turn the word of God into a watery concoction that will be so mixed up that it will no longer have any taste or goodness to it', [My translation.]

<sup>203</sup> It is interesting to note that Calvin, and his associates in the clergy, as professional public speakers, trained, used, and displayed their considerable professional 'rhetorical skills' in delivering 'public addresses' not only through 'sermons within religious services or lectures' but also through the public addresses to the councils in a more direct manner. This was a significant factor in attracting Genevan citizens' favour and 'in winning to Calvin's support a significant segment of public opinion'. This was clear in the case of the division and struggle between the 'two considerable factions of public opinion', that is, between Calvin (and his Consistory) and the secular government for the power to excommunicate. See Robert Kingdon, "Calvin and the Government of Geneva", in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, ed. Wilhelm. H. Neuser (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984), pp.61-63.

<sup>204</sup> CO 27:201, 'Now we see why Moses recommended the family line of Levi here. It's not so much for the individual gain of those who would be supported by offerings and first fruits and tithes, than for the general good of the whole people [*pour l'utilité commune de tout le peuple*]. It is so that everyone be upheld in the real unity of faith'. [My translation.]

<sup>205</sup> Barbara Pitkin, "Children and the Church in Calvin's Geneva", in *Calvin and the Church*, (Calvin Studies Society Papers, 2001), pp.146-153.

<sup>206</sup> Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor and Theologian: The Shape and His Writings and Thought*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), pp.131-146; Karin Maag,

Next, for Calvin, what implications does church discipline (such as correction and excommunication in the Consistory) have in terms of the common good of the church? Did Calvin's Consistory sit well with the value of the common good alongside the rights of the individual or did it curtail these rights in the name of the common good? This warrants more discussion here. For Calvin, it appears that the purpose of church discipline is primarily intended for the protection of the honour of God and the spiritual welfare of believers 'at both the individual and communal levels'.<sup>207</sup> According to Calvin, the main focus of church discipline must be understood as the practice of both mutual acceptance and mutual patience and nourishment.<sup>208</sup> With regard to this, it is noteworthy that Calvin's main focus on the discipline of excommunication extends from its punitive and negative functions in the *Institutes* (1536) to its corrective and positive functions in the *Institutes* (1543).<sup>209</sup> Moreover, in his *Ecclesial Ordinances* (1541), Calvin clarifies that the function of the offices of pastors and elders is to lead the correction and amendment of believers by providing in common the 'fraternal discipline' through the 'friendly' admonishment and remonstrance in the Consistory.<sup>210</sup> As Monter notes, the Consistory's power of excommunication, which became solid in 1555, is evaluated as originating in Calvin's Geneva, rather than in other Reformers' cities.<sup>211</sup> In this light, Kingdon defined the Consistory of Geneva as 'a hearing court, a compulsory counselling service, and an educational institution'.<sup>212</sup> Therefore, in Calvin's mind, the principal purpose of excommunication appears to lie in embracing the members of the church by advice, not in

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*University or Seminary: The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education 1560-1620*, (Aldershot, England: Scholar Press, 1995); J. Lee, "Calvin's Ministry in Geneva", pp.207, 212-213.<sup>207</sup> 4.12.5; Lee, "Calvin's Ministry in Geneva", p.203. In order to constitute 'Christian social formation' or 'the Reformed social ideal', not only 'individual and inner-directed efforts' but also 'communal striving' were deemed equally important, as is shown in the act of excommunication and correction by the Consistory See Elwood, *The Body Broken*, pp.147-151: Willem Van't Spijker stresses that 'the public exercise of the ban and restoration to the congregation should take place before the entire congregation, so that it would be aware of its involvement in the exercise of church discipline. For Calvin, this was an essential part of the reformation of the city'. See *Calvin: A Brief Guide to His Life and Thought*, trans. Lyle D. Bierma (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), p.107.

<sup>208</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 2.27, p.84. Kingdon points out that the Consistory generally provided a counselling service to transform mutual hate into reconciliation in a semi-private or public setting. See Robert Kingdon, "Efforts to Control Hate in Calvin's Geneva", in *Calvin Studies IX*, (Davidson, N.C: Davidson College Presbyterian Church, 1998), pp.120-22.

<sup>209</sup> Höpfl, pp.60, 118-120.

<sup>210</sup> Calvin, "Ecclesial Ordinances", pp.41, 48.

<sup>211</sup> William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), p.138.

<sup>212</sup> Robert M. Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.4.

excluding them by judgement.<sup>213</sup> Thus, ‘whether by exhortation and teaching or by mercy and gentleness, or by our own prayers to God, that they may turn to a more virtuous life and may return to the society and unity of the church’.<sup>214</sup> For Calvin, the emphasis is on correction; that is, the ultimate goal of excommunication deals with and embraces not only ‘bad Christians’ within the church but also ‘Turks and Saracens, and other enemies of religion’.<sup>215</sup> In addition, Calvin appeals to 1 Corinthians 5:1 to stress that excommunication should not be the elder’s own decisions but should be enacted according to the recognition and agreement of the whole church.<sup>216</sup> As Raymond Mentzer notes, for Calvin, church discipline is designed for the spiritual welfare of church members and for the glory of Christ, which is contrary to the Roman Church’s discipline that is designed for the maintenance of its priest-centred hierarchical order.<sup>217</sup>

Undoubtedly, excommunication was followed by some restrictions in ecclesial and social life, such as the prohibition of the sacraments and ‘intimate dealings’, such as marriage in Geneva.<sup>218</sup> Thus, Kingdon argues that excommunication in Geneva is as strict as the excommunication of the medieval church or that of the Anabaptists.<sup>219</sup> However, it is notable that Calvin’s notion of excommunication is not the eternal anathema but the temporal process of believers’ amendment. This can be confirmed by the fact that the Consistory of Geneva ‘expressed deep concern over a lack of religious knowledge and ignorance of the faith and recommended some feasible solutions, such as more sermons or catechism classes, in addition to individual help through visitations’.<sup>220</sup>

Nevertheless, Graham stresses that there exists a considerable distance between the theoretical purpose of communal restoration in Calvin’s thought on church office and the

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<sup>213</sup> Gordon stresses that ‘punishment was intended to bring about reconciliation with the community’ by employing judicial means to effect its ‘spiritual government’ (*Calvin*, p.134).

<sup>214</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 2.28, p.85.

<sup>215</sup> *Inst.* 1536, Ch 2.28, p.85; Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), p.366.

<sup>216</sup> Jung-Sook Lee, “Excommunication and Restoration in Calvin’s Geneva, 1555-1556”, PhD. Diss. (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1997), pp.63-70. Lee made an exegetical trace of who should be the agent of church discipline in Calvin.

<sup>217</sup> Raymond Mentzer, “Theory in Practice: Calvin’s Ecclesiology in the French Churches”, in *Calvinus sacrarum literarum interpres*, pp.209-222.

<sup>218</sup> Regarding effects or results of excommunication see Lee, “Excommunication and Restoration”, pp.40-52.

<sup>219</sup> Kingdon, “Social Control and Political Control”, p.523.

<sup>220</sup> Lee, “Calvin’s Ministry in Geneva”, p.214.

historical practice of ‘the public admonitions’ for believers’ amendment given by the Consistory and the pulpit of Calvin in Geneva.<sup>221</sup> As he points out, Calvin’s somewhat rigorous and imbalanced practical emphasis upon the protection of ecclesial and civil solidarity in the human community disregarded the human rights of individuals such as Jacques Gruet and Pierre Ameaux, who ‘threatened that community’.<sup>222</sup> According to Graham, this policy finally led to the unnecessary erosion of the generosity of Christian love, which is underlined as a central value in Calvin’s theological enterprise even when one considers the historical limits of the Reformers and magistrates of Geneva during the sixteenth century.<sup>223</sup> Graham stresses that Calvin’s theory on human solidarity in Christ was often defended in a manner that damaged the rights of the individual in practice: ‘the Public, then, was protected, but not the individual [that is, Jaques Gruet]’.<sup>224</sup> Graham, therefore, recognizes that Calvin’s views concerning private and public censure and excommunication did not differ much from the inquisition of pagans in historical practice in the sense that Calvin protected ‘the good of the public’ at the expense of ‘the good of the individual – which must be protected if in the long run the public is to benefit’.<sup>225</sup> As he concludes, ‘they serve perhaps, as warnings (if we need any) that even the common good must be protected with discretion, that evildoers must be tried justly and punished mercifully, that the public weal does not demand individual woe’.<sup>226</sup> Graham therefore stressed that the correction and excommunication of Calvin’s Consistory did not pursue

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<sup>221</sup> Graham, “Church and Society: The Difficulty of Sheathing Words” in *Readings in Calvin’s Theology*, pp.281-82.

<sup>222</sup> Graham, *Ibid.*, pp.284, 286. Unlike usual petty cases, which required scolding and repentance, sufficiently serious cases were turned over from Consistory to the small council for further discipline ‘ending in secular punishment’. See Robert Kingdon, “The Control of Morals in Calvin’s Geneva”, in *Church and Society in Reformation Europe*, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), pp.10-11. For instance, in 1547, Jacques Gruet was tried and sentenced to death by the Council because of his habitual blasphemy, his rebellion against the civil government of Geneva, and his favour towards the Roman Church. In 1545, the Small Council sentenced the card-manufacturer Pierre Ameaux to more than two months in prison and demanded that he make a full public confession to Genevan citizens on account of his alleged private insult against Calvin’s personality and doctrine, which he had made as an act of revenge for Calvin’s opposition to his divorce. For further details of these two cases, see William Monter, pp.74-76, Fred Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, pp.165-68.

<sup>223</sup> See the case of the card-manufacturer, Pierre Ameaux in Fred Graham, “Church and Society” pp.285-86.

<sup>224</sup> Graham, *Ibid.*, p.284.

<sup>225</sup> Graham, *Ibid.*, p.286.

<sup>226</sup> Graham, *Ibid.*, p.288.

the common good of the whole community in a way that protected the rights of individuals.

However, Graham's critical attitude towards this matter ought to be reconsidered in order to ascertain Calvin's thoughts and actions regarding the common good of the church in Geneva. Foremost, as Wilhelm Pauck notes, Calvin, unlike Bucer, purses the unity of the Church by stressing faith and truth rather than the fellowship of love.<sup>227</sup> Calvin's theory on correction and excommunication designed for the public good of the whole community must not be regarded as his theological Achilles heel, disharmonious with his thoughts on the common good of the church. In addition, though Höpfl admits that Calvin's doctrine of discipline can be 'in harmony only in the optimum case of a notorious sinner' who rightly repents and is amended according to the charitable and strict exercise of the Consistory, he points out that this ideal harmony can never be realized in the notorious cases of Bolsec, Castellio, and Servetus.<sup>228</sup> Höpfl stresses that 'moderation, mildness, and clemency in the exercise of the discipline' cannot be reconciled with 'antiseptis or wrath-aversion' but only with correction.<sup>229</sup> Thus, one can see that Höpfl, with a somewhat moderate position, seems to expound and describe the corrective purposes of discipline such as excommunication.

However, unlike Graham's argument, which is based upon his sociological study of a few scandalous cases, Lee's textual analysis of the register of the Consistory of Geneva in 1555-1556 demonstrates that both Calvin's theological theory and his practical principles are aimed towards the double protection of both individual and the community with the generosity of Christ's love.<sup>230</sup> Lee notes that the low rate of the application and approval

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<sup>227</sup> Wilhelm Pauck, *Calvin and Butzer*, pp.89-90; *Letters of John Calvin*, ed. Jules Bonnet (New York: Burt Franklin, 1972), Vol.4, p.389, (Calvin to Bucer, Jan 12, 1538).

<sup>228</sup> Höpfl, *Polity*, p.119. In 1551, Jerome Bolsec, was tried and banished from Genevan territory on account of his disagreement with Calvin's thoughts on predestination. Sebastian Castellio left Geneva in 1545 on account of the breach between himself and Calvin concerning his refusal to accept the canonicity of the Song of Solomon and his unorthodox view of the descent of Christ into Hell. In 1553, Michel Servetus was sentenced to death and burned as a heretic by judgement of the civil council on account of his denial of the two fundamental cornerstones of Christian belief; the Trinity and infant baptism. For further details of these three cases, see Naphy, *Consolidation and Genevan Reformation*, pp.88-89, 94, 182-84. See entry: 'Castellio, Sebastian (1515-63)' in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.296-97; Monter, *Calvin's Geneva*, p.83.

<sup>229</sup> Höpfl, *Polity*, pp.119-20.

<sup>230</sup> Lee, "Excommunication and Restoration", pp.37-40.

of restoration shown in the register of the Geneva Consistory is probably attributable to the fact that Calvin's theological theory and pastoral practice does not stress forced repentance, but rather voluntary repentance; it reckons 'the medieval use of secular arms' as unbiblical, and, therefore, raises the possibility of the Consistory's willingness to wait for the voluntary repentance of the excommunicated.<sup>231</sup> According to Lee's analysis, Calvin emphasized 'the rule of moderation' neither in order for the Consistory of Geneva to deal with believers rigorously nor to force them to repent, though their correction was necessary for the cultivation of the spiritual common good of the church. Instead, it is likely that Calvin and the Consistory of Geneva prudently advised voluntary repentance and sanctification to believers.<sup>232</sup> As a result, the historical records of the Consistory show that the numbers of excommunicated are extremely low compared to those summoned.

In addition, through her study of the Consistory register, Lee maintains that the parish clergymen of the Geneva Church taught the Reformed faith and pious practice to the people who were somewhat ignorant of it and who were still 'stained' by the customary religious life of the medieval church. In addition, they counselled and disciplined the ethically lapsed believers to enable their restoration.<sup>233</sup> In spite of the primary exclusion of the excommunicated from the benefits of the sacrament, lapsed believers were commanded to attend and listen to preaching<sup>234</sup> in public worship. This demonstrates that excommunication was akin to a mix of 'vinegar and oil', used to facilitate the restoration of the power of sanctification through learning the Word of God. In addition, the Consistory of Geneva, *both* through legal channels *and* by enhancing the possibility of counselling, mediation, and education, functioned to guide and direct sinners toward

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., pp.142-46.

<sup>232</sup> See Gordon, *Calvin*, p.134. Monter's study shows that 'at least two-thirds called before the consistory' between 1559 and 1564 'were eventually let off with a lecture and a reprimand' without being excommunicated. William Monter, *Enforcing Morality in Early Modern Europe*, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987), p.471.

<sup>233</sup> According to Lee, it was not easy to bring all the excommunicates to restoration although the consistory made conscientious efforts on an institutional level. See Ch. 4 of Lee's dissertation, "Excommunication and Restoration".

<sup>234</sup> CO 51:566, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 4:11-12, 'if (in short) we want to be saved, we must learn to be humble disciples, receiving the doctrine of the Gospel and listening to the ministers who are sent to us, as if it were Jesus Christ Himself speaking to us face to face...So we should demonstrate our desire for God to be honoured, our earnest desire to be saved and for the common good and the building up of the Church [*du bien commun et edification de l'Eglise*]. This will happen when young and old agree that Jesus Christ uses channels [ministers] through whom He speaks to us so that we are brought to Him'. [My translation.]



restoration and re-participation into life for the common good of the whole community, both at an ecclesial and social level.<sup>235</sup>

Therefore, through Lee's research, one may rediscover how church discipline aimed at the common good was actually practised through the ministry of generosity in Geneva. For Calvin, the discipline of the Consistory should not be misunderstood as being a simple tool intended for social control that oppresses the rights of individuals in the name of the common good of society. Rather, one can conclude that church discipline acts as a scalpel for spiritual surgery, aiming at the restoration of salvation and the sanctified life; as such, it contributed to the spiritual common good of the whole church by, rightly but generously, cultivating the spiritual welfare of each individual therein.

Finally, the deacons: Calvin describes the office of the deacon in terms of the common good of the church through ministry for the poor. He classifies this office in terms of its two duties: the procurator (*procurateur*) serves the church in administering the affairs of the poor and the hospitaler (*hospitallier*) cares for the poor themselves; this latter duty is regarded as the sole public office available to women.<sup>236</sup> It is unlikely that Calvin understood the office of deacon merely on a theoretical level; rather, he regarded it as a practical guide for the 'hospital commune'.<sup>237</sup> He suggests the exemplar of Acts 6 as the biblical standard for deacons as 'the distributor of the alms' and as 'stewards of the common chest of the poor' for the common good of the church.<sup>238</sup> One can see that, in Calvin's mind, the spiritual common good through the caring of souls is the responsibility of pastors, while the physical common good by caring for the poor through 'the public support' (*bien commun* understood as 'the shared wealth') is the main responsibility of deacons.<sup>239</sup> This means that, though relief work constitutes the ministry primarily

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<sup>235</sup> Regarding the brief duration of the excommunication and the repetition of repentance, see Monter, *Enforcing Morality in Early Modern Europe*, p.477.

<sup>236</sup> 4.3.9. p.1061; Comm. *Romans* 12:6-8. This double diaconate will be seen in the laities' ministries for the poor in the General Hospital and the French Fund of Geneva in chapter 6; see also Olson, "Calvin and Social-Ethical Issues", p.165; "John Calvin's only public office for women, the care of the poor: wet nurses, widows, and welfare among French refugees and in the reformed tradition", in *Mythes et réalités du XVIe siècle, Foi, idées, image: études en l'honneur d'Alain Dufour*, (Alessandra: dell'Orso, 2008), pp.51-69.

<sup>237</sup> CO 10:23-25; Calvin's recommendation on the strong practical role of the diaconate in the 1541 *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of Geneva, was sophisticated and refined in its later revision of 1561, David Hall, *Calvin in the Public Square*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), pp.108-110.

<sup>238</sup> 4.3.9. p.106.

<sup>239</sup> 4.4.5. pp.1072-3.

entrusted to deacons, both pastors and elders are also aware of their identity as obedient workers following the command of the Bible to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the sick.<sup>240</sup> To summarize, the ecclesial offices can be said to perform the role of reconciling ‘the social and spiritual relationship between the rich and the poor’, which is destroyed by humanity’s ‘presumption and pride’.<sup>241</sup>

In relation to the offices of pastor, elder, and especially deacon, Calvin criticizes the ‘fraudulent distribution expenditure of church funds’ by the Roman Church, since the ‘distribution of church income’ must be rightly and sufficiently used for the poor, as it was in the ancient church.<sup>242</sup> He stresses that ‘in fine, churches derive many advantages in common from these revenues, with which, before, only monks and priests were gorged’.<sup>243</sup> Calvin, therefore, recognizes that the ‘benefices’ of the Roman Church, ‘not to benefit the churches but those men who receive them’, do more harm than good to the common good of the church, because they do not prioritize the welfare of the poor.<sup>244</sup> Likewise, Calvin’s critical understanding of the ‘benefices’ can be attributed to his faithful attitude towards the community-centred use of the public property of the church. In addition, as Pattison notes, Calvin believes that almsgivings to the poor is sacrificed by the extravagant decoration of the church; this is caused by the wrongful theology of the Roman Church, which pursues the glory of the Kingdom of Christ through the hierarchical order of the priesthood and the pomp of worship.<sup>245</sup>

Thus, Calvin’s understanding of the public property of the church is closely interconnected with his theology of the common good of the church. To Calvin, believers are setting up an active and voluntary relationship with each other through union with Christ with ‘an affection of charity’, called as ‘a true mirror of Christian love’.<sup>246</sup> In so doing, this produces the believers’ cooperative life with ‘the inward unity of minds’ for

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<sup>240</sup> Raymond Mentzer, “Theory in Practice: Calvin’s Ecclesiology in the French Churches”, in *Calvinus sacrarum literarum interpres*, p.220.

<sup>241</sup> Pattison, *Poverty*, p.340.

<sup>242</sup> 4.5.16-18.

<sup>243</sup> Calvin, “The Necessity of Reforming the Church”, *Tracts and Letters*, VI, p.211; *Calvin’s Ecclesiastical Advice*. trans. Mary Beatty and Benjamin Farley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), pp.143-45.

<sup>244</sup> 4.5.4, 6; *Inst.* 1536, Ch 6.29, pp.275-77.

<sup>245</sup> 4.5.19; Pattison, *Poverty*, pp.297-302.

<sup>246</sup> *Treaties Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, ed. Benjamin Farley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1982), p.287.

the common good by their ‘mutual partaking of goods’.<sup>247</sup> Thus, one can say that the public property of the church is a visible and practical means of economic sharing and communication, established upon the spiritual solidarity of believers, the family of God in their restored image of God in Jesus Christ. Calvin believes that the spiritual life, if not accompanied by material sharing, is false, and that such sharing is an essential expression of spiritual fellowship.<sup>248</sup>

However, Calvin disagrees with Libertines, Anabaptists, and Catholic monks in his assertion that the public property of the church is never shaped by ‘a confused community of goods’, where believers act ‘to put everything into disorder, to undo the commonwealth of property in such a way that whoever has the power to take anything is welcome to it’.<sup>249</sup> Within the community, ‘such a file of confusion’ is demonstrated through the avarice of the monks in their ‘lovely community of swine’, where the receiving of gifts overwhelms the biblical practice of gift giving.<sup>250</sup> In Calvin’s mind, the common good of the church is established in a way that the charity of each believer contributes not only to the present interests of the poor but also to his or her own ultimate interests. Thus, arguing against what Calvin viewed as the natural conclusion of Anabaptists’ and Libertines’ models of fusion and lack of boundaries – namely that bankruptcy accompanied believers’ ‘renunciation of property’ – Calvin maintains that the believer who has goods should not ‘ruin himself in order to supply others, but in order to provide for his neighbours’ want out of his abundance’.<sup>251</sup> Accordingly, one can conclude that Calvin’s understanding of the public property of the church does not suggest a return to the insularity of ecclesial common property, as was the way of the medieval monastic estate. Rather, he promotes the church’s active use of common property in a reformation for the commonweal of the whole society.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Comm. Acts. 4:32, p.190.

<sup>248</sup> Biéler, *Calvin’s Economic and Social Thought*, p.346-354. Biéler recognizes material goods as the tangible tool to measure the actuality of faith, and the offering of wealth to the needy as a sign of authentic faith. See also Pattison, *Poverty*, p.321.

<sup>249</sup> Calvin, *Against Anabaptists and Libertines*, pp.289, 85.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., pp.287, 290-91.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., p.290.

<sup>252</sup> The related case study will be discussed in section on the philanthropic common good in chapter 6.

## Conclusions

At the start of this chapter, we focused on Calvin's ideas regarding the living organic church as the matrix of communal benefits for all its members by manifesting the fact that Calvin's thoughts on union with Christ, along with his idea on the gifts of the Spirit, provide a central premise in his notion of the ecclesial common good. Thus, believers' activated communal sanctification, realized in union with God by the Spirit, is dedicated to the positive and active communication of spiritual and material goodness amongst members. In order to explore both spiritual and social natures of this communication, this chapter has examined that how Calvin uses the biblical and biological language of Paul has influenced his ecclesial notion of the common good toward unity in diversity, which is then realized by the edification of believers through the right weaving of various gifts, virtues, and offices of the Spirit.

With this premise in mind, this chapter has discussed Calvin's focus on prayer, sacrament, office, and property in relation to his notion of the ecclesial common good both at spiritual and sharing level. First, it has shown that, for Calvin, believers' prayer such as mutual confession of sins and public fasting, as the reflective echo of Christ's intercession for the common good of His church, unlike the self-centred form of prayer shown in the Roman Mass, can be understood and actualised as an active and philanthropic participation for the edification of the whole church. This Christ- and Church-centred communal character of prayer is manifested by Calvin's public perspective on the Lord's Prayer.

Moreover, this chapter has continued to examine Calvin's discussion of the sacraments, such as baptism and Eucharist, with his notion of the common good both at spiritual and social levels. First, baptism should be regarded as a public gate through which strangers become part of God's family, and marks the starting common ground of all believers' sanctified life of self-denial for the common good of the whole church. Along with this, this chapter has demonstrated Calvin's argument that, unlike the commercial Roman Mass, the graced Eucharist should be understood as both a spiritual sign that reflects union with Christ and as a spiritual banquet to nourish God's children by exchanging their spiritual hunger with the sole spiritual food from Christ, which entails the material sharing amongst them.

Furthermore, this chapter has examined how Calvin focuses on the four mutual offices of pastor, teacher, elder, and deacon in terms of the collegial ministry designed for the construction of the spiritual and social common good through religious and civic education, collegial cooperation, disciplined moderation, and social welfare activities. Also, this chapter has shown Calvin's belief that the inseparability of the ecclesial and social common good should be realized by the active and voluntary gift-sharing system within the Christ-centred spiritual and material inter-connected life, unlike the Roman church's idea of the gift as merit or the Anabaptist's idea of the gift-collective. Given the above discussion of Calvin's understanding of the ecclesial dimensions of the common good, it will be necessary now to consider his main concerns regarding political,<sup>253</sup> economic, and philanthropic common good, along with his notion of the common grace, in order to explore in-depth his notion of the common good of humankind both at divine and social levels.

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<sup>253</sup> See Appendix.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **HUMANKIND AND THE COMMON GOOD**

In the previous chapter, where Calvin's understanding of the church from the perspective of his theology of the common good was discussed, it was concluded that Calvin recognizes the church as the organic matrix of communal benefits for all members on the basis of his doctrine of union with Christ; thus, both spiritual and physical gifts are designed for the edification of the whole community. Accordingly, for Calvin, the common good of the church is not only decisive but also a dynamic value to be woven from the multiple threads of all ecclesial gift-sharing activities such as prayer, sacrament, office, and property. Consequently, the ecclesial common good produced by regenerated collegial works within their active and voluntary gift-sharing system can be regarded as an exemplary model for the consolidation of a mutual supporting system within civil solidarity for its social common good.

In what way, then, is this voluntary mutuality applied to civil society? In other words, how can both alienated and isolated realities of humankind be ameliorated and restored by the cooperative participation of both believers and unbelievers within a mutual system for the social common good? Moreover, where within Calvin's doctrine of humankind is this topic discussed?

To answer these questions, this chapter will explore how Calvin's doctrine of common grace can be re-illuminated by his understanding of the common good of humankind; it will also seek to understand how this common grace is related with the spiritual common good of the church. Consideration will be given to the effect of Calvin's communal and consummative vision of the original order upon his understanding of the mutual relation between the spiritual common good of the church and the social common good of humankind. Thereafter, keeping in mind the debate on Calvin's socio-economic concerns introduced at the start of this thesis, there will be an elucidation of his thoughts on the economic common good with regard to labour, land, wages, commerce, and usury. Finally, there will be an attempt to clarify Calvin's views on the philanthropic common good, using historical examples such as the General Hospitals and the Bourse Française, from the perspective of his understanding of the spiritual and social common good.

## 6.1. Common Grace for the common good of humankind

This section will discuss Calvin's understanding of common grace and its teleological implications with regard to the common good of humankind. Thus the following questions will be raised: is common grace, which is given to all people, the most crucial and extensive contribution to the common good of humankind? Or is the sanctifying grace given to believers the more active element in realizing the common good of humankind? How, for Calvin, do common grace and special grace establish their mutual relationship for the common good of humankind?

In order to discuss these questions properly, it will be important first to have a brief overview of the debate amongst Calvin scholars on Calvin's original intention vis-à-vis common grace. After this, attention will be paid to the functional implications of Calvin's thoughts on the common good of humankind as a new interpretive guide to his original thoughts on common grace. In addition, an understanding of common grace, which is focused anew in terms of the common good of humankind, will become an important theological basis from which to explain the communal values that occur in Calvin's thoughts on economics and philanthropy, subjects that will be dealt with in the following sections.<sup>1</sup>

To begin with, it is necessary to investigate the debate between Calvin scholars with regard to their understanding of common grace in Calvin's writings. Cammenga divides these scholarly approaches into the categories of proponents and opponents.<sup>2</sup> The traditional proponent group strongly link Calvin to the teaching of common grace by enlarging and schematizing Calvin's 'profoundly held but not deeply analyzed remarks on the closely related topics of natural or general revelation, universal providence, and common grace'.<sup>3</sup> The proponents, directed by Kuyper and his New Calvinism, claim that the doctrine of common grace can be clearly found in Calvin's writings.<sup>4</sup> For them, the

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<sup>1</sup> In the Appendix, consideration will be given to the discussion of how Calvin's communal and consummative vision of the original order affects his understanding of the mutual relation between the spiritual common good of the church and the social common good of humankind within his political thought.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Cammenga, "Another Look at Calvin and Common Grace", *PRTJ*, 41.2 (2008), pp.3-25.

<sup>3</sup> Partee, *Calvin*, p.117.

<sup>4</sup> As the representative proponents, see Abraham Kuyper, *De Gemeene Graite*, 1:6, [Cammenga's translation], p.5; Herman Bavink, "Common Grace" *CTJ* 24.01 (2006), pp.35-65; Herman Kuiper,

main duties of common grace, on account of it being an unsustainable barrier against sin, is not to renew, change, and conquer humanity's sinful nature but to curb, restrain, and compel it in order to stave off its catastrophic consequences.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, it is notable that Berkhof highlights the doctrine of common grace as essentially 'communal'.<sup>6</sup>

Moving on, in contrast to these proponents, there is a more modern group that makes a somewhat slender link between Calvin and the teaching of common grace. According to these opponents,<sup>7</sup> one needs to rediscover and elaborate precisely that which is implicitly contained in Calvin's original teaching on common grace. Thus they criticize the proponent group for failing to appreciate Calvin's original intent with regard to common grace by claiming that, in Calvin's writings, both positive *and* negative perspectives on common grace coexist.<sup>8</sup> These opponents suggest that Kuyper's New Calvinism, which is so explicit on the subject of common grace, is different from the original Calvinism, which is more inferential about the subject of common grace; it follows, therefore, that, in their eyes, it cannot be a right guide to Calvin's writings.<sup>9</sup>

How, then, can one resolve this debate surrounding the relationship between Calvin and common grace? Here, one may suggest that the proponents tend to attach the doctrine of common grace too closely to Calvin, whilst, on the other hand, the opponents tend to remove Calvin too far from it. Hence, if one follows the position of the former group, common grace is treated as an independent and important theological category within Calvin's theology of the common good. On the other hand, if one follows the position of the latter group, which supports a looser connection or even a contradiction between Calvin and common grace, the role and weight occupied by common grace in Calvin's theology of the common good of humankind will be reduced.

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*Calvin on Common Grace*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Smitter Book Company, 1928), pp.2, 5, 215, 223; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), p.434.

<sup>5</sup> Bavink, "Common Grace", pp.51, 61.

<sup>6</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p.434.

<sup>7</sup> See Ronald Cammenga; Hendrikus Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years of Theology: Report of a Personal Journey*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p.109; Peter Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p.116-260; James Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p.165; Quoted in Cammenga, "Another Look at Calvin and Common Grace", pp.20-23.

<sup>8</sup> As a balanced contemporary proponent, see Richard Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2001), p.18.

<sup>9</sup> Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, pp.140, 259, 260.



Is the reader then left to choose only between these two groups in their attempts to study Calvin's theology of the common good of humankind and its relation to the doctrine of common grace? Not necessarily. In Calvin's final edition of the *Institutes* (1559), the main text on the common good of humankind appears in another of his statements on common grace. Hence, it may be possible to find a new angle or channel, which enables the reader to approach Calvin's original thought on common grace and understand more deeply the nuances contained in his explanation about the common good of humankind. Through this method, a constructive and alternative interpretation will be presented, in addition to the existing discussion of Calvin's original intention for common grace. Consequently, this section will attempt to delineate how Calvin's original thought on common grace constitutes an important foundation for his theology of the common good.

The theological-anthropological backdrop of Calvin's practical thought on the common good of humankind appears most clearly within a statement in his final edition of the *Institutes* about intellectual understanding as a natural endowment that is not wholly extinguished in humanity after the Fall.<sup>10</sup> Calvin concludes that God left many gifts to 'human nature even after it was despoiled of its true good' after the Fall.<sup>11</sup> What, then, is the divine cause and purpose in doing so? Calvin's declaration on this subject cannot be more clear and concise: 'we ought not to forget those most excellent benefits of the divine Spirit [*praestantissima divini spiritus bona*], which he distributes to whomever he wills, for the common good of mankind [*publicum generis humani bonum*]'.<sup>12</sup> In other words, Calvin suggests that both the intellectual function and volitional function of natural law, the substantial image of God, as the gifts of grace of the Spirit based upon the providence of God, survive as the most significant and decisive functional tools for the establishment of the common good of humankind.<sup>13</sup> Here, what one ought to observe is the fact that, just after the statement cited above, Calvin discusses the case of the understanding and knowledge of 'Bezalel and Oholiab' in the Exodus 31.<sup>14</sup> Within this context, the gift

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<sup>10</sup> This statement about the remaining substantial image of God has already been discussed in detail in chapter 2.

<sup>11</sup> 2.2.15. p.275; CO 2:199.

<sup>12</sup> 2.2.16. p.275.

<sup>13</sup> Regarding the role of the noetic and volitional function in the natural law, see Moon, *Christ the Mediator*, pp.92-95. Regarding the correlation between reason and common grace, see Marc-Edouard Chenevière, *La Pensée Politique de Calvin*, (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), pp.56-60, 73.

<sup>14</sup> 2.2.16. p.275; OS 3:259. See also Comm. *Exodus*. 31:2-11.

giving of the divine grace for the common good of humankind is not performed by ‘the Spirit of sanctification’ given to believers but is performed according to the so-called common grace by the creative work of the ‘same’ Spirit given to both believers and unbelievers.<sup>15</sup>

In light of this, it will be useful to confirm briefly the theological presumptions related to Calvin’s understanding of common grace in order to understand correctly his theology of the common good of humankind. First of all, Calvin indicates the threefold development<sup>16</sup> of the cosmic works of the Spirit as follows:

The working of the Spirit is various [*multiplicem spiritus actionem*]: for there is that which is universal [*universalis*], by which all creatures are sustained and preserved; there is that also which is peculiar to men [*peculiars in hominibus*], and varying in its character: but what he means here is sanctification [*sanctificationem*], with which the Lord favours none but his own elect.<sup>17</sup>

As Van’t Spijker and Y. Lee analyze, Calvin distinguishes these various relations within a threefold concentric circle, in each of which the same Spirit works distinctively.<sup>18</sup> The outermost peripheral circle includes God’s ministry in creation,<sup>19</sup> the middle circle surrounds the space that is necessary for humanity itself, and the central inner circle is related to the redemptive ministry of the Spirit. Thus, one may suggest that Calvin’s thoughts on the common good are also endowed with these various layers, rather than being a simple singular concept. That is, first, the common good in the creation of the heavens and the earth as ‘the most glorious theatre’<sup>20</sup> becomes the outmost peripheral

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Chung, *Spirituality and Social Ethics in John Calvin: A Pneumatological Perspective*, (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2000), pp.13-24.

<sup>17</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 8:14, p.295; CO 49:147. For Calvin, the threefold ministries of the Spirit, God the Creator and God the Redeemer (*Spiritus Creator et Spiritus Regenerator*: 1:13:14; CO 2:101-p.102) are consistent with the three forms of the life created by God; that is, ‘animal life’ [*vita universalis*], ‘human’ [*humana*] life’, and ‘supernatural’ [*supernaturalis*] life’. All are ‘from God, the life of God [*vita Dei*]’; see Comm. *Ephesians*. 4:18, p.291; CO 51: 205.

<sup>18</sup> Willem Van’t Spijker, “The Kingdom of Christ according to Bucer and Calvin”, p.122; Yang-Ho Lee, “The Structure of Calvin’s Theology”, *YJT*, 1 (1996), pp.119-120. As a related topic, Kuyper develops the threefold sovereignty of God displayed in the state, society, and church. In Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1931), p.78-80. Partee explains P.H. Reardon’s argument that God’s governance has three angles such as the order of nature, divine direction of all things, and divine governance of the faithful, see Partee, *Calvin*, pp.116-17.

<sup>19</sup> 1.13.14; CO 2:102.

<sup>20</sup> 1.5.8; 1.6.2; 2.6.1; 3.9.2; CO 2:46-47, 54-55, 247-248, 524-525.

circle, secondly, the common good for humankind is the middle circle, and thirdly, occupying the central circle, is the common good of the church.<sup>21</sup>

Given the circular structure described above, it will be useful now to consider the arguments of those occupying a more central position, but with a bias towards special grace<sup>22</sup> rather than common grace. Their perspectives may therefore be regarded as being closer to the opponents than the proponents. Partee claims that ‘the purpose of Calvin’s discussion of universal providence is not to define a common ground or territory between the believer and the unbeliever’.<sup>23</sup> In line with this, Dowey points out that there is ‘a soteriological centre’, which dominates all areas of Calvin’s theology.<sup>24</sup> In other words, since God the Redeemer occupies the central position, whilst God the Creator occupies the peripheral position, it is right to argue that ‘Calvin’s doctrine of providence directly addresses Christian believers and only incidentally general mankind’.<sup>25</sup> Thus, it may be inferred that, for Calvin, as theologian rather than philosopher, the primacy of the common good of the church cannot depend on the secondary status of the common good of humankind; moreover, the latter cannot be the presupposition and context of the former. In the same manner, Wallace emphasizes that ‘this general grace of God’ is not from God the Creator, but ‘is simply the turning of the same grace as we know in Christ towards man in his fallenness’.<sup>26</sup> Thus, given these views, one may imagine that Calvin’s theological thoughts on sovereignty, providence, grace, and, especially, common good, can be likened to the shape of an old penny-farthing bicycle, run decisively by the larger and crucial wheel of special grace though also requiring the smaller rear wheel of common grace. Christ is the one guiding and moving the wheels of this bicycle. In this theological ‘bicycle design’, the smaller rear wheel of common grace is not as large as the proponents aver, yet not as small and insignificant as the opponents believe.

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<sup>21</sup> Calvin’s classification of ‘universal providence’ (*providential Generalis*) and ‘special providence’ (*providential Specialis*) is discussed in Herman Selderhuis, *Calvin’s Theology of the Psalms*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), p.97.

<sup>22</sup> In Calvin’s theological enterprise, the central place of the believer’s mystical union with Christ (*mystica unio cum Christo*) can be regarded as a crucial touchstone, by which the special grace of the Spirit has incomparable relative importance than common grace. See Partee, *Calvin*, pp.193-208.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Partee, “Calvin on Universal and Particular Providence”, in *Readings in Calvin’s Theology*, pp.71-74.

<sup>24</sup> E. A. Dowey, “The Structure of Calvin’s Thought as influenced by the Two-Fold Knowledge of God”, in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, p.137.

<sup>25</sup> Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, p.118.

<sup>26</sup> Wallace, *Geneva*, p.104.

Consequently, it can be inferred that Calvin focuses more upon the common good of humankind as the outcome of God's special providence than upon the common foundation between believers and unbelievers. This means that Calvin does not subordinate the common good of the church to the common good of humankind, as he does not subordinate special grace to common grace.<sup>27</sup> As already discussed in Chapter Two, this is consistent with the fact that Calvin regards the natural gift, that is, the remaining substantial image of God in humanity, more negatively than positively. If one recalls Calvin's illustration about the surviving substantial image of God contained in the image of demolished architecture, Calvin's vision of the realization of the common good of humankind based upon common grace seems to be very limited and partial when compared with that of the common good of the church based upon special grace.

However, as Calvin regards both special grace and common grace as distinctive but neither independent of nor separable from each other, one might suggest that the common good of humankind can be distinctive, but neither independent of nor separable from the common good of the church. For Calvin, Christ ought to be accepted as being for the common good of both church and humankind. As discussed in Chapter Three, Christ restores the social common good through his renovation of the spiritual common good. Simultaneously, as will be discussed in detail through this chapter, Christ can be understood as the sustainer and conservator of the social value of the common good, aside from its ecclesial value.<sup>28</sup> Thus, it may be proposed that, for Calvin, thanks to Christ the Redeemer and Creator, the common good of the church is not to be imagined as isolated but rather inclusive of the common good of humankind.

Keeping this in mind, and returning to the previous point about the mutual relation between the common good of humankind and the gifts of God, it is important to consider whether Calvin's original intention is harmonious with the above mentioned theological presumption: common grace associated with special grace and the common good of humankind associated with the common good of the church.

First of all, it is worth noting that Calvin clarifies that the gifts of divine grace for the common good of humankind are granted not only to the godly who are doing God's work,

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<sup>27</sup> See Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, p.167.

<sup>28</sup> Regarding the proposition of *Extra-Calvinisticum*, see 2.13.4. p.481.

such as ‘Bezalel and Oholiab’, but also to ungodly pagans.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Calvin suggests setting up a proper relationship between believer and unbeliever for the good use of the gifts of God (*Dei dona*) given to believers: ‘If the Lord has willed that we be helped in physics, dialectic, mathematics, and other like disciplines, by the work and ministry of the ungodly, let us use this assistance’.<sup>30</sup> This means that Calvin exhorts believers to participate actively in a broader mutual fellowship that goes beyond intra-communication among church believers for the common good of the church and humankind. Here, Calvin’s original nuance of the three terms related to the so-called common grace – ‘the general grace of God’, ‘God’s special grace’, ‘the peculiar grace of God’ – appears to be that God may give His universal but special gifts to anyone, even though they are not of the elect.<sup>31</sup>

Related to this, it is important to explore Calvin’s discussion of the benefits of something divine implanted in all humanity, such as the seeds of political order, the law, and the light of reason.<sup>32</sup> It is worth remembering that this divine gift, like natural reason and will,<sup>33</sup> is given and remains, not for ‘heavenly things’ above nor ‘the blessedness of the future’, but for ‘earthly things’ below and ‘the level of the present life’.<sup>34</sup> In this distinction between spiritual and physical life, Calvin stresses ‘the common energy’ of the natural gifts given to all without discrimination through ‘the arts and science’, ‘astronomy’,

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<sup>29</sup> Comm. *Exodus*. 35:30, p.296; 1.11.12. p.112.

<sup>30</sup> 2.2.16. p.275.

<sup>31</sup> 2.2.14 and 17.

<sup>32</sup> 2.2.13. p.272-3.

<sup>33</sup> 2.2.5 and 7; CO 2:190-191; 2.3.5; CO 2:2.13-215; 2.4.1; CO 2:224-225.

<sup>34</sup> 2.2.13. p.272. To those who regard natural law as a moral notion, distinctive from the order of nature, it may appear that, since natural law is recognized as a negative character due to its damage by the Fall, its contribution to the common good of humankind may also be relatively weak. See Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man*, 164; Wilhelm Niesel, *Calvin*, pp.42-43, 102-103. On the other hand, to those who regard natural law as an intellectual notion including not only the order of nature but also equity, since natural law is recognized as somewhat positive regardless of the Fall, its contribution to the common good of humankind may be considered substantial. See Edward Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, pp.65-70; John McNeil, “Natural Law in the Teaching of the Reformers”, *JR* 26 (1946), pp.181-82; Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory*, pp.17-18, 30-32. Related to this topic, Klempa suggests that Calvin’s idea of ‘nature’ is used in a twofold sense; on the one hand, referring to ‘the original created perfection before the Fall’, understood as ‘substantial property’, and, on the other hand, referring to ‘corrupted and fallen nature’, understood as having an accidental or adventitious quality. See “Calvin on Natural Law”, in *John Calvin & the Church*, pp.79-81; likewise, as David Vandrunen notes, for Calvin, natural law in the civil kingdom plays a positive role in achieving cultural accomplishment, but, in the kingdom of Christ, it is evaluated as worthless in attaining salvation. See David Vandrunen, “The Two Kingdoms: A Reassessment of the Transformationist Calvin”, *CTJ* 40 (2005), p.263.

‘philosophy’, ‘medicine’, and ‘the order of civil government’.<sup>35</sup> For example, consider Calvin’s explanation regarding the tents of Jabal in his commentary on Genesis:

For the invention of arts, and of other things which serve to the common use and convenience of life, is a gift of God by no means to be despised, and a faculty worthy of commendation...the sons of Cain, though deprived of the Spirit of regeneration, were yet endued with gifts of no despicable kind; just as the experience of all ages teaches us how widely the rays of divine light have shone on unbelieving nations, for the benefit of the present life; and we see, at the present time, that the excellent gifts of the Spirit are diffused through the whole human race.<sup>36</sup>

Here, in Genesis, Calvin notes different kinds of divine favour, which are distinct from his idea of God’s favour of salvation, as mentioned in his commentary on Psalms.<sup>37</sup> According to Cammenga, Calvin’s notion of God’s favour in his commentary on Psalms ought to be regarded in a negative way in relation to common grace; however, one might argue instead that within this passage, Calvin is making a positive statement about God’s special favour towards believers in relation to eternal life. In addition, Calvin’s presentation of God’s favour in his commentary on Genesis 4 indicates his understanding of God’s visible favour toward humanity within the present life; this is a characteristic of common grace given to the unbeliever.

In addition, Calvin states that, according to the universality of divine providence, God’s grace includes not only ‘such [special] grace as to cleanse it [nature]’ but also common grace ‘to restrain it [nature] inwardly’; such common grace is unrelated to salvation.<sup>38</sup> This form of restraint is another invisible characteristic of common grace given to the unbeliever. Thus, one ought to classify and recognize God’s favour as being bestowed within both the spiritual life and the physical life.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> 2.2.14; CO 2:197-198; Comm. *Genesis*. 4:20, p.218.

<sup>36</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 4:20, p.218. Whilst recognizing the spiritual limitation of natural gifts, Davis Young gives attention to the fact that the utility of liberal arts and science and human ability to gain artistic and scientific knowledge are good gifts from God in this present life. This appreciation of the role of science in human life is founded on ‘Calvin’s conception of an order of nature’. See Davis Young, *John Calvin and the Natural World*, (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 2007), pp.6-10, 202-205.

<sup>37</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 1:1: ‘God is favourable to none but those who zealously devote themselves to the study of divine truth’; see also 73:3, 92:9.

<sup>38</sup> 2.3.3. p.292.

<sup>39</sup> With regard to the apparent contradiction between God’s wrath and His favour towards the reprobate as represented in Calvin’s writings, Henry Meeter suggests that, since God’s favour toward the unelected is possible in terms of His love for creatures based on an ‘infralapsarian view’,

However, regarding the divine distribution of common grace, Calvin emphasizes the qualitative dissimilarity between a large majority of ordinary people and a few chosen extraordinary people.<sup>40</sup> He uses the term ‘the most excellent knowledge’ in relation to this latter group within his discussion of the mutual relationship between common grace and the common good of humankind.<sup>41</sup> According to Calvin, God gives ‘higher gifts’ as additional common grace to the ‘noble and excellent artificers’, to whom the primary common grace is already given, and in so doing, makes all God’s gifts of grace celebrated in all of society through every generation.<sup>42</sup> In Calvin’s mind, the more excellent the natural gifts are, the broader their political, educational, and cultural benefits. God’s gifts are given by ‘some particular impulsion’ for the public vocation, which is granted, through divine providence, not for the recipients’ own private advantage, but for the good of all people.<sup>43</sup> This is illustrated in both ‘the whole course of government’ in Scripture<sup>44</sup> and also in the excellence of the elite shown in the work of Homer.<sup>45</sup> Thus, one can say that, for Calvin, the natural gifts participate in the construction of the welfare of humankind through the crossing and dialectic use of humanity’s generality and excellence.

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the doctrine of common grace regarding the good in unbelievers through God’s grace can still be harmonized with God’s spiritual judgement of unbelievers, see Henry Meeter, *The Basic Idea of Calvinism*, Ch 6, pp.50-56.

<sup>40</sup> 2.2.14.

<sup>41</sup> 2.2.16.

<sup>42</sup> Comm. *Exodus*. 35:30, p.280; Wallace, *Geneva*, p.105.

<sup>43</sup> 2.2.17; Calvin’s *Sermons on Deuteronomy* 1:9-15 of 1555, CO 25:630, ‘first of all, when Moses protests that he is no longer capable of bearing the responsibility for leading the people, he shows us that those who occupy some sort of higher or more honourable position should not be like idols, passive, doing nothing, but that they should work and even more, they serve the common good of the people [*ils servent au bien commun du peuple*], because God has placed this burden upon them, that of serving the common people. This is a good doctrine to adhere to, considering just how ambitious men are, everyone seeks to be respected and honoured, and all aspire to greatness’. [My translation.]

<sup>44</sup> CO 46:104, for instance, Calvin, in his ninth sermon on Luke 1, teaches that ‘we should learn the lesson that God’s gifts are not only given out in different ways and to different extents, as St Paul says, but also that our Lord is generous to us when we need it, giving more than there was before, according to need. We see when Saul was elected King; he was like a new man. Why? Because the spirit of God [*l’Esprit de Dieu*] filled him so that he could perform his duties [*son devoir*]. God did not do this for Saul’s own sake, but for the salvation and common good of the people [*Car Dieu n’avait point fait cela pour le regard de sa personne, mais pour le salut et bien commun du peuple*]. The same applies to all God’s children [*les enfants de Dieu*]...Sometimes we are weak, but if God calls us to fight and He wishes us to fight for His cause, then He will give us new strengths and talents’. [My translation.]

<sup>45</sup> 2.2.17.

To sum up, one can suggest that Calvin develops his positive statement that the ‘admirable light of truth’ (*admirabilis veritatis luce*) shines even within the secular order of ‘pagans’ regardless of their corruption; it is the outcome of God’s clothing and ornamenting humankind with His excellent gift (*eximiis Dei donis*).<sup>46</sup> Calvin’s positive viewpoint on this natural gift remaining in ancient jurists, civic order, philosophy, the art of disputation, medicine, and mathematical science,<sup>47</sup> is located just before his declaration of the intimate mutual relationship between the common good of humankind and gifts of divine grace. Accordingly, to Calvin, the natural gift, despite its corruption and limitations, must be actively used and enjoyed by all people for the physical common good of humankind. However, this natural gift, as suggested by Aquinas,<sup>48</sup> should be regarded not as separate from or in opposition to God’s grace but rather as utterly dependent upon such grace.

Thus, Calvin’s doctrine of common grace gains a positive nuance when it is associated with believers’ activities in the saving work of Christ, from the perspective of the common good of humankind, which is distinctive but inseparable from the common good of the church. Moreover, Calvin’s doctrine of common grace still implies a somewhat positive nuance regarding the common good of humankind in the actual creation of Christ, though it is not directly associated with believers’ activities. Accordingly, one may conclude that Calvin’s thoughts on the common good of humankind are developed in relation to his teaching on the so-called common grace, which is given to both believer and unbeliever. In addition, it has been confirmed that, in Calvin’s mind, the common grace given for the common good of humankind can also be used for the spiritual common good of the church according to God’s special providence.<sup>49</sup> Unlike the existing debate between the proponents and opponents, the above analysis of common grace from the perspective of the common good of humankind foregrounds an alternative viewpoint for clarifying the correlation between special and common grace as

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<sup>46</sup> 2.2.15. p.273.

<sup>47</sup> 2.2.15. p.274.

<sup>48</sup> Jean Porter, “The Common Good in Thomas Aquinas”, p.111.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, the article by Susan Hardman Moore. Moore suggests that although Calvin has a somewhat sceptical perspective on the human capacity to imagine God in a spiritually right way, he provided ‘a rationale for the proliferation of Scripture-image’ through ‘the lens of typology’ and laid a cornerstone for Puritans’ interests in ‘images’ associated with ‘mental imagination’ for divine contemplation, which appeared in the culture of Reformed Christianity. Susan Hardman Moore, “Calvinism and the Arts”, *TS* 16.2 (2009), pp.82-85.



the unifying foundation of Calvin's socio-ethical doctrine. Having established this, there will now follow a discussion of Calvin's writings on the economical and philanthropic common good against the backdrop of common grace and special grace focusing on the subjects of labour, wages, commerce, interest, alms-giving, the General Hospital, and the French Fund.

## **6.2. Calvin's Economic Common Good**

### **6.2.1. Economic common good and God's original order**

This section will discuss the way in which Calvin's vision of the original order in terms of the common good has an important influence on his socio-economic thought.<sup>50</sup> As briefly discussed in the introduction of this thesis, this study is crucial because the modern relevance of Calvin's socio-economic thoughts has been re-illuminated by increasing concerns about the theme of the common good within 21<sup>st</sup> century theology. In light of this, a socio-economic case-study of Calvin's common good will offer a fresh angle to the modern debate, on one side, by reinforcing Biéler's communal viewpoint and, on the other, by challenging Weber's individual viewpoint.

First, unlike the case of the origin of politics,<sup>51</sup> Calvin's discussion of the origin of economics is less controversial, since for him, economics is, without doubt, an essential element in the order of creation.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, as Billings points out, there is some tension between Barth's understanding of Calvin's socio-economic view as being 'more Stoic than Christian' and Hesselink's claims that Calvin's view is decisively Christian, being based on God's image in all.<sup>53</sup> In line with the latter, Billings stresses that Calvin appropriates and adopts the classical pagan notion regarding 'the natural law and equity' contained in the Stoics' humanistic 'insight about the civil order and law' within his biblical and Christian theology of neighbor-love, albeit 'in a modified form'.<sup>54</sup> Such an

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<sup>50</sup> Paul Chung stresses that 'the order of creation', which is primarily characterized by mutual solidarity, 'plays an important role in understanding the social and economic thought of Calvin' (*Spirituality and Social Ethics*, p.106).

<sup>51</sup> This will be discussed in the Appendix.

<sup>52</sup> Regarding Calvin's view of humanity having a central place within economy at creation, see W. Venter, "Calvin and Economics According to the *Institutes*", in *John Calvin's Institutes: His Opus Magnum*, (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University, 1986), pp.272-92.

<sup>53</sup> See Billings, "Participation", p.216; Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/II, p.419-20; Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of the Law*, p.136.

<sup>54</sup> Billings, "Participation", p.216; Haas, *the Equity*, Ch.1 and 2.

integration of the classical notion into a biblical notion has already been discussed in Chapter Four, with regard to the second table. One will see that Billings' framework can be adopted as a useful interpretative tool in this section's discussion of how the value of the common good is realized in church and society within the interaction between spiritual and economic communication.

As Leith notes, for Calvin, God gives His image and 'common flesh' to all humanity, and makes it 'the double basis of social responsibility' for 'every person's well-being', along with the gift of an abundant world 'with an immense profusion of wealth'; therefore, this 'very order of the creation' itself plays both a revelatory and pedagogical role in showing and directing the right principle of life 'for the common good [*en commun*]'.<sup>55</sup> In light of this, Biéler regards both 'solidarity' uniting all people and the 'exchange', which constitutes 'an integral part of the primitive social order', as forming 'the first mark of the social order created by God' for the common good of all. Within this assumption, he stresses that 'there is no fundamental distinction between the various kinds of communication – spiritual, cultural and material. There is no difference'.<sup>56</sup> Thus, he points out that, for Calvin, 'companionship', which begins with marriage and family, is wholly completed 'in work and in the interplay of economic exchange'; consequently, 'the mutual exchange of goods and services is the concrete sign of the profound solidarity which unites humanity'.<sup>57</sup>

However, the Fall of humanity distorts these original economic activities through the monopoly, greed, and exploitation of all good things within the subversion of 'the whole order of nature'.<sup>58</sup> Thus, today's economic deviation is, fundamentally, nothing less than a spiritual disease; that is, the spiritual denial of the divine calling to use rightly God's gifts for the benefit of the community.

Thus, one can suggest that, for Calvin, the restoration of God's image in Christ entails the restoration of the original purpose of God's creation through socio-economic communication. This socio-economic solidarity, including philanthropy and charity, is

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<sup>55</sup> Leith, *The Christian Life*, 186-187; Comm. *Genesis*. 1:26; Calvin, *Sermon XIII on 1 Corinthians*. 11:11-16, CO 49:740 (Quoted in Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.206).

<sup>56</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.206.

<sup>57</sup> Biéler, *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, pp.17-18.

<sup>58</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 3:19.

built by the intersection between willingly mutual servitude and universal mutual communication mediated by Christians' self-denial and freedom, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four.<sup>59</sup> In light of this, one needs to remember that the comparison between unbelievers' dim notion of equity and believers' clearly restored notion of equity, as put forward in Chapter Four, can be directly applied to all sub-areas of the economic dimension.

Whilst considering the interrelated economic challenges in his own time, Calvin believes that the best example of 'the original solidarity of mankind' as the divine order restored through mutual service between the rich and the poor can be found within the church, but it is realized beyond the church and the border of nations.<sup>60</sup> Thus, Calvin teaches that believers, as the restored image of God, 'should not live to themselves and to the promotion merely of their own interests, but should endeavour to promote the common good of all according to their opportunities, and as far as they are able'.<sup>61</sup> In relation to this, one may recall Noelliste's analysis that Calvin's primary concern in both his political and economic thought is the Christian's de-absolutization of self-interest.<sup>62</sup> With this in mind, Noelliste suggests that 'the common good' must be the central common direction for both political and economic 'activities'.<sup>63</sup> This reinforces the usefulness of making a deeper investigation into the detailed subsections of Calvin's economic thought on labour, commerce, wage, and interest within the remit of the mutual communication designed for God's economy.

### 6.2.2. Labour

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<sup>59</sup> See *Sermons on Ephesians*. 5:2-26; Comm. *Psalms*. 55:13; 3.19.4. It is interesting to note a unique concept of 'economic sanctification', which is hardly supported by other theologians except Calvin. This means 'the increase in virtue through business' or 'an act of sanctification of the believer sacrifices some of his individual blessings for the good of others', see David Hall and Matthew Burton, *Calvin and Commerce: The Transforming Power of Calvinism in Market Economies*, (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2009), pp.193-94.

<sup>60</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.57; *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, 14:24-29.

<sup>61</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 37:27; CO 31:380, Quoted in Leith, *The Christian Life*, p.191.

<sup>62</sup> Noelliste, "Calvin's Socio-Political Ethics", p.239.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.228. In a similar vein, Frank G. Kirkpatrick, focusing on Calvin's sense of common service, which is connoted in his analogy of human body, asserts that 'for Calvin commitment to the common good determined the virtue and validity of the society as a whole, and thus justified civil interventionist measures in its economic life when that good was threatened by inappropriate private economic behaviour', *The Ethics of Community*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001), p.32.

First of all, it will be useful to investigate how Calvin's thoughts on the correlation between labour and the common good are dynamically formed through the three stages of redemption. For Calvin, the land, as the basis of labour, is God's gift given for the benefit of the whole community, exemplified in the case of 'the common good of the whole race of Abraham (*in commune bonum totius generis Abrahae*)'.<sup>64</sup> Calvin's communal viewpoint on the land leads one to the communal implication contained in the divine origin of labour. Thus, one can see that, in Calvin's original thought on labour and work, his communal vision for the gratuitous and shared life of the gifts of God's grace is more foundational than the individual ethics enacted by Weber's analysis of 'a psychological sanction of systematic conduct' for 'the methodological rationalization of life', regarded as a visible and 'objective result' of salvation.<sup>65</sup> In light of this, Wallace stresses that 'to labour is to fulfil the gracious order of nature, which is planned according to the image of God'.<sup>66</sup> Thus, as discussed in Chapter Three, Calvin's thoughts on divine calling are integral to his opinion regarding the common sharing of labour among humankind.<sup>67</sup>

How, then, is labour changed after the Fall? Calvin contrasts the willing cheerfulness of labour before the Fall with the coercive painfulness of labour after the Fall. Nevertheless, he suggests that some surviving pleasure may still remain:

In that labour there had been sweet delight; now servile work is enjoined upon him, as if he were condemned to the mines. And yet the asperity of this punishment also is mitigated by the clemency of God, because something of enjoyment is blended with the labours of men, lest they should be altogether ungrateful.<sup>68</sup>

This suggests that Calvin's understanding of labour is closely interconnected with his theological anthropology as the image of God in humanity, as discussed in Wolterstorff's statement in the introduction of this thesis. The pleasure and willingness of labour, which is damaged but not completely lost, implies both the destroyed relational image and surviving substantial image. However, in spite of this, as Graham points out, it is evident that although work is 'one of the good gifts of God', it is no less than 'the fallen good' by

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<sup>64</sup> Comm. *Joshua*, 4:7; CO 25:452.

<sup>65</sup> Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pp.68-80.

<sup>66</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 2: 15; CO 23:44; Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.155.

<sup>67</sup> Wallace, *Ibid.*, p.155.

<sup>68</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 3:17.

the Fall of Adam.<sup>69</sup> This is clearly shown in the case of usury that injures the original order of social intercommunication through labour and makes economic justice collapse.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, Calvin believes that Christians, through the restored image of God in Christ, bring back the social joyfulness of labour into their lives. Calvin stresses that the Sabbath must be understood as a symbolic and spiritual reality of 'the complete incorporation of mankind in the work of God', which is achieved in Christ alone.<sup>71</sup> Thus, to believers united with 'Christ the liberator from the vexations of work', labour is neither a burdensome oppression nor an alienated curse but is rather a lightened, joyful, and pleasant sign of grace, which enables effective social labour relations.<sup>72</sup> As Calvin states, 'as those things which had been spoiled in Adam are repaired by the grace of Christ, the faithful feel more deeply that God is generous to them, and enjoy the sweetness of his paternal indulgence'.<sup>73</sup> This implies that, though there seems to be an apparent similarity between the pleasures of labour remaining in fallen humanity and the delight in labour renewed in the restored humanity in Christ, there is still a qualitative dissimilarity between the two. As Calvin states, 'the grace of God, manifested in the faithful enjoying the fruits of their labour is set in opposition to the curse to which all mankind has been subjected...God's children are happy in eating the fruits of their labour'.<sup>74</sup>

In terms of the original role of labour, which is renewed in Christ, Calvin criticizes Scholasticism's separation of spiritual value from physical labour by 'giving priority to contemplation over action'. Instead, as Biéler points out, Calvin clearly attempts to reconnect 'a spiritual dignity and value' with labour by delineating it as a liturgical service for the common good:<sup>75</sup>

Men were created for the express purpose of being employed in labour of various kinds, and that no sacrifice is more pleasing to God, than when every man applies

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<sup>69</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.80.

<sup>70</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, 80ff; Comm. *Psalms*. 15:5; c.f. Comm. *Ezekiel*. 18:8; Comm. *Exodus* 22:5; Comm. *Deuteronomy*. 23:18-20.

<sup>71</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, pp.345-56; Comm. *Genesis*. 2:3.

<sup>72</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, pp.349, 354.

<sup>73</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 3:19, quoted in Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.354. See also Comm. *Psalms*. 128:2; *Sermons on 1 Timothy*, 6:12.

<sup>74</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 3:23, quoted in Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.355.

<sup>75</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, pp.46-47.

diligently to his own calling, and endeavours to live in such a manner as to contribute to the general advantage [*commune bonum*].<sup>76</sup>

Calvin's emphasis on the original role of labour restored in Christ calls attention to its communal function. He states that 'it is certain that no occupation will be approved by him which is not useful and that does not serve the common good and that also redounds to the profit of everyone'.<sup>77</sup> With this in mind, Graham evaluates that, 'as in the rest of his [Calvin's] social and economic thought, the touchstone for evaluating a profession is whether it serves the common good'.<sup>78</sup> In addition, since Calvin regards labour as a shared gift for the community in response to God's gift giving, one can suggest that he prefers to evaluate the value of work in terms of the common good:

For it is not enough when a man can say, Oh, I labour, I have my craft, or I have such a trade...But we must see whether it is good and profitable for the common good, and whether his neighbours may fare the better by it...he [God] will only approve of occupations which are profitable and serviceable to the whole community, and which reflect good also to all men...let him [son] also see to it that he serves his neighbours, and that the use of his skill and occupation may redound to the common profit of all men.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, given that it is not inconsistent with the perspective of the preservation and promotion of the common good, freedom of choice in one's occupation can be regarded as positive, and therefore forms another kind of exchangeable value for the practical utility of the whole community.<sup>80</sup> Regarding this, it is notable that Weber describes Calvinistic puritan Richard Baxter as expressing a positive attitude about 'the division of labour' on the condition of its optimal utilitarian value for the common good.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, one ought to attend to Weber's analysis of how Baxter's utilitarian notion of labour and the common good plays a crucial role in forming the individual and ascetic spirit of capitalism: 'The specialization of occupations leads, since it makes the development of

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<sup>76</sup> Comm. *Luke*. 10:38; CO 45:381-382; Chung, *Spirituality and Social Ethics in Calvin*, pp.106-109.

<sup>77</sup> *Sermons on Ephesians* 4:26-28, CO 51:639, Quoted in Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, pp.80-81. Thus, Calvin, in *Contre Les Anabaptistes*, teaches that 'since they don't deny that all professions that are beneficial to humankind as a whole [*à l'utilité commune du genre humain*], are legitimate and holy, why do they exclude from this the function of Prince, which is above all the others?', [my translation], CO 7:84.

<sup>78</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.80: Cf. Comm. *Matthew*. 25:34.

<sup>79</sup> *Sermons on Ephesians*. 4:26-28, pp.457-58; CO 51:640, '*l'usage de son art et de son mestier revienne au profit commun de tous*'.

<sup>80</sup> See *Sermons on 1 Corinthians*. 7:20.

<sup>81</sup> Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p.107.

skill possible, to a quantitative and qualitative improvement in production, and thus serves the common good, which is identical with the good of the greatest possible number'.<sup>82</sup>

In contrast, Bouwsma stresses Calvin's elaboration of 'the primacy of community over individual', given Calvin's belief that 'God had intended the division of labour to reinforce community by making human beings dependent on each other'.<sup>83</sup> In addition, as Weber points out, the Puritans' standard of occupational alteration and their combining of several employments are based on whether 'it is useful for common good or one's own'.<sup>84</sup> Weber's focus on the interrelation between Calvinists' love of neighbours and their secular utilitarianism might show an apparent structural parallel with the interaction between Christian freedom and its socio-economic application, as illustrated in Calvin's thoughts on the common good. However, if one considers the close correlation between the spiritual and social common good in Calvin's writings, Biéler's understanding of socio-economic activities as the embodiment of spiritual fellowship is more convincing than Weber's suggestion that these activities be discerned in terms of a secular utilitarianism.<sup>85</sup>

Thus, from the standpoint of Calvin's affirmative applause of labour's spiritual implications restored in Christ and its communal contribution, idleness is recognized as anti-communal wrongdoing. As McKee highlights, 'because God made people to live together, mutual communication is expressed also in each person's faithful fulfilment of an honest vocation. Idleness is condemned, while any task which contributes to the common good is a legitimate vocation'.<sup>86</sup> In a similar vein, Calvin considers the deprived opportunities of labour as a common nuisance, for both 'the individual and the common welfare'.<sup>87</sup> Accordingly, Graham concludes that Calvin's main concern is for the formation of the right relationship between employer and employee, since he believes that 'all that pertains to work must be instruments of commonweal and not social oppression'.<sup>88</sup> In light of this, one can suggest that Christian social action in relation to

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Bouwsma, *Calvin*, p.202.

<sup>84</sup> Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p.108.

<sup>85</sup> The debate between Weber's group and Biéler's group has already been discussed in the introduction of this thesis.

<sup>86</sup> McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving*, p.251.

<sup>87</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.82.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

labour, explicated by a form of 'Calvinist social piety',<sup>89</sup> plays a part in renewing the original function of labour for the common good, whilst struggling to overcome the structural depravity of occupations against the common good in the fallen world. As Wolterstorff states:

Each occupational role must either be made to serve the common good, or if in some case that cannot be done, then that role must be discarded. It is not true that if everyone works devotedly in the occupation to which God called him or her, the common good will automatically be served; one has to see to it that one's occupation serves the common good rather than simply assuming that it does, for...we live in a fallen, corrupted society: the structures of our social world are structures which in good measure do not serve the common good.<sup>90</sup>

### 6.2.3. Wages

Within this discussion of the relation between labour and the common good, it is important to consider how the communal implication of wages, which are exchanged for labour, can be rediscovered in the context of Calvin's theology of gifts of grace. For Calvin, wages are not regarded as the simple price of the merit of labour, but must be understood as a tangible sign of the divine gift given by 'the unmerited grace of God'.<sup>91</sup> Both employer and employee should consider wages in terms of the free grace of their 'common Master in heaven'.<sup>92</sup> The employer is not the real provider of wages, but is only a conveyor of God's gifts to the employee: 'men in paying wages are dealing with the grace of God which goes from person to person within the human community'.<sup>93</sup> Wages can thus be understood as a free exchange of the gifts located within the system of grace designed for the common good. Thus, this may be a premise for Graham's analysis of why Calvin deals with the standard of 'just wages' on a spiritual, rather than mathematical, basis.<sup>94</sup> As Graham notes, Calvin refers to the quantitative or mathematic standard of wages only in a negative manner when he explains why the concept of the legal minimum wage itself is unacceptable in light of the biblical standard of equity before God.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Wolterstorff, *Justice and Peace*, pp.20-21.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>91</sup> See Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.83; Comm. *Luke*, 17:7; McKim, *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, p.301; Biéler, *The Social Humanism*, p.47.

<sup>92</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.84; Sermons XCVI on *Deuteronomy*. 15:16-23; CO 27:357.

<sup>93</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.84; Biéler, *The Social Humanism*, pp.47-48.

<sup>94</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.84.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.84-85.



Following this line, Biéler stresses that the amount of salary paid to the employee must be set by both employer's and employee's 'common agreement, freely, with full awareness of their responsibility'.<sup>96</sup> This implies that 'human solidarity in Christ' can be viewed as 'the clue to management-labour relations'.<sup>97</sup>

One can therefore see that, for Calvin, just wages are the visible gifts of God's free grace prepared for His children who can participate in labour as tools of inter-communication intended within the original order of creation, which is restored in Christ. Calvin's basic manifesto on God's economy given by the gifts of grace is rooted in equity: 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'; this is the principle directing all Calvin's economic issues and is demanded as both a spiritual and moral basis through just wages.<sup>98</sup> In Calvin's mind, the salary, as a gift exchanged with the gift of labour designed for the common good, is also designed for the same common good. Combining this with his notion of employees' renewed dignified communal identity as 'children of God', Calvin participated actively in social activism that strived for reasonable wages and 'just remuneration' in accordance with the practical necessities of the low waged.<sup>99</sup> In sum, in Calvin's mind, both labour and wages, as gifts of grace, are instruments intended by God to actualize the consummative restoration of the original order for the common good of all people.

#### 6.2.4. Commerce

For Calvin, believers are the main subjects who re-institute the right and desirable circulation of economic goods through both commerce and charity in the fallen world within their restored economic solidarity based on both 'the natural order God has instituted' and 'the new solidarity Jesus Christ establishes'.<sup>100</sup> In addition, through his analysis of the parable of the talents, Calvin manifests that both the modes of believers' sanctified lives and the commercial activities in the world stand on common ground in terms of their promotion of mutual interrelationships by the exchange of the gifts. As he states:

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<sup>96</sup> Biéler, *The Social Humanism*, p.48.

<sup>97</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.84.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.85.

<sup>99</sup> Biéler, *The Social Humanism*, pp.49-51.

<sup>100</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.296-7; Gordon, *Calvin*, pp.297-98.

The life of the godly is justly compared to trading, for they ought naturally to exchange and barter with each other, in order to maintain intercourse; and the industry with which every man discharges the office assigned him, the calling itself, the power of acting properly, and other gifts, are reckoned to be so many kinds of merchandise; because the use and end which they have in view is to promote mutual intercourse among men'.<sup>101</sup>

Regarding this, as Wallace points out, Calvin believes that 'the mutual exchanges involved in a healthy commercial intercourse between individuals and different sections of society could play an invaluable part in creating good community life'.<sup>102</sup>

Furthermore, Calvin's thoughts on economic solidarity are also actualized by the reciprocal exchange between geographical locations. In light of this, Calvin evaluates that towns around local rivers, ports, and sea shores can flourish quickly since they can import and export more merchandise conveniently.<sup>103</sup> He declares that 'no public government can be lasting without the transactions of commerce'.<sup>104</sup> Calvin believed that 'selling and buying' is a visible manifestation of God's grace, and a halt in trading indicates God's judgment. His particular concern about commerce and the formation of socio-economic thought appear to be shaped by the explosive development of trade in Europe and by the various economic issues, such as labour, wages, and wealth inequality, which were seriously affecting Geneva's reliance on foreign trade and its printing, paper-manufacturing, machine, and textile industries.<sup>105</sup> In this manner, Calvin has a generally positive attitude towards the trend of capitalistic trade, which was newly formed around urban cities. However, he held that commerce must be done according to a certain disciplined principle, that is, the mutual cultivation of honesty, justice, and equity.<sup>106</sup> For, the purpose of commerce is the pursuit of the glory of God; therefore, the corruption of commerce is not only a moral mistake but also an impious blasphemy.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Comm. *Matthew*, 25:20; CO 45:569; quoted in Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, pp.77-78.

<sup>102</sup> Wallace, *Geneva*, p.86.

<sup>103</sup> Comm. *Isaiah*, 23:2-3.

<sup>104</sup> Comm. *Isaiah*, 24:2.

<sup>105</sup> Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation*, pp.121-139; Friedrich Lutge, "Economic Change", G. R. Elton, ed. *The New Cambridge Modern History, Vol. II, The Reformation 1520-1559*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.36-39.

<sup>106</sup> Comm. *Genesis*. 29:14.

<sup>107</sup> CO 28:236, *Sermons on Deuteronomy* 25:13-19, Calvin teaches that 'our Lord constantly reminds us what we require in order to develop loyalty and love for our brothers and sisters in Christ...we should remember that inasmuch as something promotes the public interest [*bien public*], it is to be encouraged and adhered to...if people were allowed to tamper with the system of

In addition, and unlike Luther,<sup>108</sup> Calvin takes a limited positive stance on the commerce and industry located in the private property system within the standard of both divine law and natural law. Calvin recognizes commerce and industry as God's given vocation; for him, the trading activities of merchants take a precious role in a sound social life. Here, one can see that although Luther has the theological insight to discover the concept of 'wonderful exchange' in his doctrine of salvation, he does not expand it into the area of economic theology, that is, the commercial exchange of goods as divine gifts. On the other hand, Calvin shows his farsightedness by focusing on the common-good-oriented character within both the shared value and communicative function of commercial goods and their public value. According to Weber, although Luther regards labour as a divine calling, he is somewhat passive with regard to its placement in the structured social economic system. However, Calvinists not only consider labour as a divine calling but also place it actively into the sphere of social economic activities which have 'a characteristic element in their ethical system'.<sup>109</sup> In terms of his economic common good, Calvin gives his theological support to the development of capitalism with his positive viewpoint on the distributive function of commerce, which is comparable to the productive function of agriculture and industry.

Moreover, Calvin is the first theologian who evaluates positively the providential role of commerce for the preservation of humankind, as a gift-exchange mode, which conforms to the original order of grace in God's creation. His belief, that the essence of commerce can be found in the exchange of God's gracious gifts, can be harmonized with the Reformed Church's theology of the Eucharist as grace; that is, God's system of gift-sharing. In other words, in Calvin's theology of the Eucharist, spiritual life without

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weights and measures [*les poids et les mesures*], there would be virtually no law and order at all...whoever flouts this system of weights and measures greatly offends against God'. [My translation.]

<sup>108</sup> Luther basically differentiates the negative function of the commerce of luxuries through foreign trade, which may result in both economic waste and lack, from the positive function of useful commerce through the necessary buying and selling of domestic commodities according to law, custom, and conscience. The rule of commerce does not belong to the right of the merchant but to the right of neighbours. (*LW* 45, pp.246-250) Nevertheless, Luther seems to show more negative tones in relation to the character and activities of merchants when he emphasizes the necessity of political leaders' strict laws by illustrating their works as 'such a bottomless pit of avarice and wrongdoing' or 'pure monopolies'. Furthermore, Luther believes that 'the trading companies' and humanity's 'right and honesty' have an antipathy toward each other (*LW* 45, pp.270-72).

<sup>109</sup> Weber, *The Protestant Ethics*, p.64.

material action is a deceitful fantasy; his recognition of physical communication as a sign visibly to manifest real spiritual communion can be applied to his thoughts on economics, especially commerce, that is, ‘material trade’.<sup>110</sup> It does not stand in agreement, however, with the Roman Church’s theology of the Mass as commerce, that is, the system of selling and buying merits. In relation to this, as Dermange notes, Calvin believes that ‘related to the purpose of Providence, it [economics] has to be of service to the life of all human beings, and exchange is held to be necessary in relation to this condition’.<sup>111</sup> For Calvin, it is clear that the existence and prosperity of human society is dependent upon commercial exchange; however, he warns against the risk of commerce and its misuse as a tool of greed by humanity’s sinful nature. As he states:

Navigation cannot, indeed, be condemned on its own account; for, by importing and exporting articles of merchandise, it is of great advantage to mankind...it is the will of God that the whole human race should be joined together by mutual acts of kindness. But as it most frequently happens that abundance leads to pride and cruelty, Isaiah reproves this kind of merchandise...there is often a large amount of tricks and dishonesty, and no limit set to the desire of gain’.<sup>112</sup>

Furthermore, as Leith notes, Calvin decries dishonest and unfair exchange in commerce since ‘false weights and measures’ can be compared to the ‘false coin’, which destroys society as an exchange system of God’s gift.<sup>113</sup> Thus, one can conclude that, whilst Calvin’s understanding of commerce as the honest and open communication of economic gifts is consistent with his idea of the original and embracing communal image of God, he believes that the dishonest misuse of commerce to abuse economic gifts is closely connected with the isolated and exclusive image of fallen humanity. In sum, one can conclude that Calvin’s somewhat balanced and moderate notion with regard to commerce forms a crucial facet of the foundation of his thought on the gifts of God’s grace.

### **6.2.5. Interest**

For Calvin, merchants are good contributors to the social economy, not only by their participation in hard labour, but also by laying themselves open to ‘many inconveniences

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<sup>110</sup> Biéler, *Calvin’s Economic and Social Thought*, 346-354; and *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, p.51.

<sup>111</sup> Dermange, “Calvin’s view of Property”, in *John Calvin Rediscovered*, p.46.

<sup>112</sup> Comm. *Isaiah*. 2:16.

<sup>113</sup> Leith, *The Christian Life*, p.191; CO 24:675; 28:235.

and dangers'.<sup>114</sup> As Calvin evaluates commerce in a positive manner on account of its character of gift communication, so he, unlike Luther,<sup>115</sup> permits interest even to Christians in terms of its character of the same gift communication. In other words, Calvin seems to adjust his notion of interest in terms of the social common good.<sup>116</sup> Thus, he believes that the excessive profits gained by usury, money-mongers, and interest on money borrowed by the poor ought to be banned since they do not support gift communication for the poor. On the other hand, interest within industry gained by business people should be allowed on account of the fact that it will eventually contribute positively towards gift communication for the economically disadvantaged through its effect on the productive credit of the 'production loan'.<sup>117</sup> In other words, Calvin sees 'loans without interest in view of helping our neighbour' as beneficial, but has less use for usury; whilst the former is an altruistic action towards communal care, the latter is simply a selfish act.<sup>118</sup> For, in Calvin's mind, money is not a simple tool for exchange, but must be a tool of communication used to promote the circulation of social goodness.<sup>119</sup> As Biéler notes, for Calvin, 'money...does not have a merely utilitarian function. It has really a spiritual mission'.<sup>120</sup> It should therefore play a vital role in the real economy and the common good. Thus, in his 1545 letter to Sachinus, Calvin writes:

It could be wished that all usury, and even the name, were banished from the earth. But since this is impossible, it is necessary to concede to the common good...Therefore, I do not consider that usury is wholly forbidden among us, except it be repugnant to justice and charity.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Comm. *Psalms*. 15:5.

<sup>115</sup> Luther, *Three Treatises*, p.107.

<sup>116</sup> CO 28:156, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*. 24:1-6, 'Now, Moses added two laws, one of which is to be patient with newly-married couples, the other is to stop those who lend money from being too hard, that they should not accept securities in such a way that ruins their friends and neighbours or prevents them from supporting themselves financially...there is no doubt that here Moses had in mind the common good of all [*il n'y a nulle doute que Moyse n'ait ici voulu regarder au bien commun de tous*]', [my translation]; CO 10.1:246, 'There's no doubt it's a good thing to hope to see usury banished from the world to the extent that the very word would be completely unknown. But since this is impossible we have to accede to the general interest [*l'utilité commune*]' [My translation.]

<sup>117</sup> Biéler, *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, pp.56-57.

<sup>118</sup> Biéler, *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, pp.56-57.

<sup>119</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.56; Biéler, *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, p.36.

<sup>120</sup> Biéler, *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, p.31.

<sup>121</sup> CO 12:210; quoted in Georgia Harkness, *John Calvin: The Man and His Ethics*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1931), pp.205-6.

As Noelliste stresses, ‘a just economic system is one that is always mindful of the common good, and consequently refrains from acting in ways that undermine it. It is in keeping with this conviction that Calvin surrounds his approval of lending money at interest with a series of measures designed to keep this from degenerating into a socially harmful free-for-all’.<sup>122</sup> In this light, as Biéler suggests, Calvin puts the ‘determining factor’ of the rate of interest under the remit of the lender’s responsibility to the borrower before God and Christ at both a spiritual and social level; he also sets ‘relative norms’ of the state to pursue the social order of ‘the public interest’.<sup>123</sup> This implies that Calvin’s notion of interest is firmly founded upon the balanced role between church and state within his theology of the common good.

Nevertheless, it is notable that Biéler criticizes Calvin for not giving full attention to the economic function of ‘saving as a new source of productivity’, which is found within the value of capitalization through ‘the economic development of any society’.<sup>124</sup> This implies that, for Calvin, who focused more on the establishment of the common good through the mutual communication of shared materials, a more in-depth study of the positive function of saving might have been riskier because of the individualistic nuances of saving.

### **6.3. Calvin’s Philanthropic Common Good**

#### **6.3.1. Calvin’s theology of alms giving<sup>125</sup>**

Calvin’s theology of alms giving is most clearly defined within his statements on the wealth of generosity in chapters 8 and 9 of Paul’s second epistle to Corinthians.<sup>126</sup> Here, one can see that Calvin’s theological backdrop of alms giving is found in the mutual relation between the two main themes of his theology of the common good: God’s free gift of grace and believers’ cheerful sharing. Calvin stresses that ‘as our heavenly Father freely bestows upon us all things, so we ought to be imitators of his unmerited kindness in

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<sup>122</sup> Noelliste, “Calvin’s Socio-Political Ethics”, p.230.

<sup>123</sup> Biéler, *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, p.57.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.41, 61.

<sup>125</sup> The following subsections regarding alms giving are correlated with the section on church’s property in chapter 5.

<sup>126</sup> As Gordon notes, ‘the 2 Corinthians commentary’ of Paul is Calvin’s main theoretical resource for explaining Christian ‘almsgiving’ (*Calvin*, p.200).

doing good, (Matt. v. 45); or at least, because, in laying out our resources, we are simply the dispensers of his favour'.<sup>127</sup> Here, God's command for alms giving does not compel a specified sum.<sup>128</sup> God, not as 'tyrant' but as 'Father', requires of believers 'the cheerful obedience of children'.<sup>129</sup> In addition, God encourages believers' good works for the poor with His promise to turn these works to their advantage.<sup>130</sup> Therefore, in order to relieve 'the indigence of the brethren' in Jerusalem, who are 'afflicted with a great famine', believers ought to help them actively and diligently according to the 'perfect and singular pattern' of Christ, and ascribe all their alms giving 'with a view to the public advantage of the brethren' to 'the grace of God'.<sup>131</sup> In addition, in relation to the mode of human involvement in alms giving, Calvin attempts to analyze the multiple identities discovered in Paul's biblical notion of 'a readiness of will' or 'liberality':<sup>132</sup>

There are three gradations...as to acting. First, we...act unwillingly, but it is from shame or fear. Secondly, we act willingly, but...it is from being either impelled, or induced from influence, apart from our own minds. Thirdly, we act from the promptings of our own minds...of our own accord...Such cheerfulness of anticipation is better than the actual performance of the deed.<sup>133</sup>

Calvin seems to regard the first mode of action as the passive and coercive manner found in the first and second use of the Law. He views the second mode of action as the tension between inward passivity and outward activity found in the second use of the Law. The third mode of action seems to conform to the voluntary manner found either in human conscience based on the natural law according to the second use or in the believer's response by the inspiring work of the Spirit according to the third use. Moreover, Calvin links these three modes of action related to his three usages of the Law, discussed in Chapter Four, with the inner 'disposition' of alms-giving to 'give liberally' to the poor.<sup>134</sup> That is, in Calvin's mind, in the first and second mode of action, the motivation of alms giving is to participate in doing good with 'reluctance, regret, and constraint' in the manner of being 'compelled' by extrinsic 'necessity'. For he states that 'when we are constrained from the influence of others, having...an inclination to avoid it...we do

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<sup>127</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*, 8:4.

<sup>128</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*, 8:8.

<sup>129</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*, 9:7.

<sup>130</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*, 9:8.

<sup>131</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*, 8:1-8.

<sup>132</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*, 8:13.

<sup>133</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*, 8:10.

<sup>134</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*, 9:7.

nothing in that case with alacrity – nothing with cheerfulness, but everything with reluctance or constraint of mind’.<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, only the third mode of action can be the right model of the believer’s alms giving. For Calvin, the believer’s free obedience to God is an inner necessity, as he states that ‘we...impose a necessity of our own accord, and because the flesh is reluctant, we often even constrain ourselves to perform a duty that is necessary for us’.<sup>136</sup>

Thus, one can say that believers, through their mode of alms giving, realize Calvin’s third mode of action, represented by liberality like ‘a perennial fountain’ located in the third use of the Law. With this in mind, Billings stresses that ‘unlike the portraits of Calvin in the contemporary gift discussion’, Calvin believed that ‘the very nature of love and gift-giving’ is located not in the ‘unilateral’ mode of coercion but in the mutual mode of ‘gratitude and cheerfulness’.<sup>137</sup> In relation to this, believers take a decisive part in the life of ‘equality’ to avoid both the rich person’s ‘intemperance’ or the poor person’s ‘necessities’ by their ‘more forward’ and ‘more active’ role in the ‘participation (*communicatio*), which Christ has established among the members of his body’.<sup>138</sup> In this manner, believers become role models for the ‘mutual communication of wealth within society’ through ‘a continuous redistribution of goods’ from the rich, as ‘the ministries of the poor’, to the poor, as ‘receivers of God’.<sup>139</sup> Through the example of Christians, economic goods, misused in selfish disorder, re-enter into ‘the circuit of spiritual life’ in fellowship with Christ, and thus the original economic order in creation before the Fall is restored by the renewal of this shared economic life.<sup>140</sup>

It will be helpful now to consider further Calvin’s theological theory of alms giving in terms of the realization of the common good. In order to do this, there will be a consideration of the way that his theory is actualized by his life and practical ministry in the context of the General Hospital and the French Fund.

### 6.3.2. The General Hospital

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<sup>135</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*, 9:7.

<sup>136</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*, 9:7.

<sup>137</sup> Billings, “Participation”, p.221.

<sup>138</sup> Comm. 2 *Corinthians*, 8:14-5.

<sup>139</sup> Biéler, *The Social Humanism of Calvin*, pp.32-33.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.



The transformed theology of gifts of grace espoused by reformers such as Luther and Calvin shed new light on ‘the importance of charitable institutions to meet the needs of the indigent, the disadvantaged, and the victims of the historical events of the time’.<sup>141</sup> In Geneva, both before and after the Reformation, the consistent needs of society were ‘the educational and welfare needs of people’.<sup>142</sup> Before the Reformation, in Catholic Geneva, there were already seven hospitals to help the poor, established by ecclesiastical corporations, the city government, lay confraternities, and one wealthy family.<sup>143</sup> These hospitals were managed by the administration of the procurator with the assistance of the hospitaler, elected by the civil government with its gradual trend of rationalization and laicization since the fifteenth century.<sup>144</sup> In addition, there was another Catholic social welfare programme, called the ‘box for All Souls in Purgatory’, which was originally established for ‘the masses for all dead Genevans in purgatory’ by the Catholic tradition of

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<sup>141</sup> Jeannine E. Olson, “Calvin and Social-Ethical Issues”, in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.153-54. See Luther’s thoughts on the social welfare and the ‘Common Chest’. For Luther, the medieval Church’s ideology to replace salvation as God’s gift with the meritorious acts of humanity is a blasphemy (see Lindberg, “The Liturgy after the Liturgy”, p.177). According to *The Freedom of a Christian*, love, not merit, should be the motivation of charity for the poor. Luther believes that since love flows from the faith that we are righteous in Christ, love can be filled with joy, willingness, and a free mind, and, thus, believers’ gifts can be freely given to neighbours without any consideration. In this manner, ‘the good things we have from God should flow from one to the other and be common to all’ as ‘from Christ the good things have flowed and are flowing into us’, (LW 31, pp.367-71). Luther closely links worship with believers’ charity for the common chest (*bona ecclesiae*) through his preface of *Ordinance of a Common Chest* in Leisnig of 1523 by stating that ‘there is no greater service of God than Christian love which helps and serves the needy’, (LW 45, pp.172-73). Accordingly, Lindberg calls charity ‘the liturgy after the liturgy’. One can say that the intimate connection between worship and charity in the early church was divided by the medieval church, but is reconnected by Luther. In addition, it is notable that the core of the Wittenberg Order in 1522 is the reformation of liturgy and welfare. Luther found the original form of Common Chest for the poor in the early church (Lindberg, “The Liturgy after the Liturgy”, pp.184-87). The Common Chest in Wittenberg, instituted with the agreement of Luther, was managed by the laity of the civil government, and it was bestowed not only for the charity of the poor but also for the wage to priest, teacher, organist, and clerk (Harold Grimm, “Luther’s Contributions”, in AR 81 (1970), pp.226-29). In addition, the Common Chest in Leisnig was instituted by Luther’s advice and approval in 1523, and was designed not only for the ecclesial common good such as the salaries of the priest and managers and the maintaining of church buildings but also for the social common good such as the basic support for the poor and orphaned, education for children, loans to qualified artisans and merchants, and the management of schools (LW 45, pp.172-183; Lindberg, ‘The Liturgy after the Liturgy’, p.188). Luther’s social welfare reformation is closely related to his theological change. One can suggest that Luther transformed the old welfare system of the medieval Church based on both individual and church-centred theology of charity into the new welfare system of the Protestant Church based on both communal and society-centred theology of gift of grace.

<sup>142</sup> Olson, “Calvin and social-ethical issues”, p.153.

<sup>143</sup> Kingdon, “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, p.215.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.; Kingdon, “Social welfare in Calvin’s Geneva”, p.54.

linking prayer for the dead with charity for the living'.<sup>145</sup> This implies that Catholic Geneva's social welfare system was under the influence of the Roman Church's theology of the common good of the church, as the doctrine of merit, which required wealthy believers to give their property not only 'for the welfare of the poor' but also for 'the repose of their own souls'.<sup>146</sup>

However, the Reformation brought about a revolutionary change to Geneva not only in religious terms, but also in a social dimension.<sup>147</sup> The civil government of Geneva, as a new accompaniment to the Protestant Reformation, closed and confiscated the two major Catholic social institutions managed by the privileged few, which included all seven of the hospitals and the 'Box for All Souls in Purgatory'; in their place, they established the General Hospital as a single newly reformed social welfare institution in 1535.<sup>148</sup> This suggests that the social welfare institution based on the Catholic doctrine of the common good of the church (*bien commun de l'Eglise*)<sup>149</sup> was already practically abolished in Geneva even before Calvin's entrance in 1536. This was due to the political victory of the new Protestant and lay civil government over the vested right of older Catholic groups, such as the prince-bishop and the duke of Savoy.<sup>150</sup> This historical upheaval also provided new philanthropic soil to form a basis for the constant innovation of the reformed social welfare institution based on Calvin's theory of graced practice in the *Institutes*, 3.7.5.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Kingdon, "Calvinism and Social Welfare", p.216.

<sup>146</sup> Kingdon, "Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva", p.54.

<sup>147</sup> Davis shows the historical fact that the clear-cut contrast between Catholic France's particularistic, private, and sumptuous gift-reciprocal practice to demand the 'immediate obligation' and Protestant Geneva's public welfare system to encourage 'more general forms moving through the whole community' was shaped by the theological difference between Catholic sacrifice and Calvin's gratuitousness. Her analysis could be used to explore another substantial difference between Catholic's France and Calvin's Geneva in terms of the notion of the common good of the church and society (*The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, p.120). In line with this, David Hall states that 'Calvin's welfare program in Geneva was contoured to the theological emphases of the Reformers...the theology of the Reformation was the guiding force for this welfare, just as the theology of medieval Roman Catholicism was the guiding principle for almsgiving', *Calvin in the Public Square*, p.106.

<sup>148</sup> Kingdon, "Calvinism and Social Welfare", p.217; Olson, "Calvin and Social-Ethical Issues", p.164.

<sup>149</sup> This means the common property (as the shared heritage of the church) for salvation based on the medieval doctrine of purgatory and the prayer for the dead, which will be later criticized by Calvin's *Institutes* (1559), 3.5.3; CO 4:163.

<sup>150</sup> Kingdon, "Calvinism and Social Welfare", p.216.

<sup>151</sup> Kingdon, "Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva", p.55.

In spite of these initial historical changes, Geneva's circumstances at this time meant it was still unable to fulfil even the minimal level of social common good as illustrated by Calvin's commentary on the Psalms:

Many, too, harassed by poverty and hunger, and others impelled by insatiable ambition or avarice and a desire of dishonest gain, were become so frantic, that they chose rather, by throwing all things into confusion, to involve themselves and us in one common ruin, than to remain quite by living peaceably and honestly.<sup>152</sup>

However, after Calvin's entrance into Geneva in 1536, one can see that his church was 'vitaly concerned with the bodies, as well as the souls, of its members'; the General Hospital in Geneva was the clearest example of the diaconate's activities for 'the body's chief arena of action'.<sup>153</sup> The General Hospital was not a medical hospital in the modern sense but 'an all-purpose institution that provided "hospitality" to all sorts of people who were recognized to possess needs that they could not meet with their own resources'.<sup>154</sup> As Kingdon notes, this Hospital aimed to provide a common system of shelter and food to the sick, the old, the disabled, orphans, and visitors in Geneva through its decisive step towards a 'rationalized and laicized' centralization during the Reformation of previously disseminated relief institutions.<sup>155</sup>

The first funds for all seven hospitals and the Box for All Souls, raised by the property of previously decentralized Catholic churches, convents, and confraternities, were taken over and managed by the various collections of the centralized city council, including 'its appropriated money, revenue from fines, gifts or alms, and the sale of items devoted to charity'.<sup>156</sup> The General Hospital was directed, not by Calvin and other pastors, but by 'a committee of trustees or procurators, as they were called, who were chosen by the city council', most of whom supported Calvin's spiritual leadership.<sup>157</sup>

However, although Calvin and the Company of Pastors of Geneva were not involved deeply in the administration of the hospital, they performed regular visits and showed

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<sup>152</sup> Preface to Comm. *Psalms*; CO 31:30.

<sup>153</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.104.

<sup>154</sup> Kingdon, "Calvinism and Social Welfare", pp.213-14; and "Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva", p.52, in *AHR*, 76.1 (1971), pp.50-69.

<sup>155</sup> Kingdon, "Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva", pp.52-53, 55.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55; Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.100.

<sup>157</sup> Olson, "Calvin and Social-Ethical Issues", p.164; Kingdon, "Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva", pp.64-65.

ongoing interest in order to give advice and to report to and enquire on behalf of the civil council, thus ensuring a transparency and right order in all its dealings.<sup>158</sup> In addition, Calvin, as one of the commissioned members of the city council, attempted to set up new industries such as ‘a cloth-making or fustian business’ for the rehabilitation of the poor within the General Hospital.<sup>159</sup> Graham calls it ‘a holy alliance with industry’ between church and state since these new industries were managed in the hospital by deacons of the church.<sup>160</sup> Calvin makes reference to such care for the poor in the Geneva *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541.<sup>161</sup>

The priests, who constituted most of the procurators of the Catholic hospital, were all replaced during the Reformation by devotional lay deacons working as ‘well-to-do business or professional men’, assisted by the hospitalers, who were businesspersons within commerce.<sup>162</sup> This historical fact is interesting when one considers Calvin’s common theological perspective of commerce and alms giving, both of which are set up for the common good of the whole society. Olson classifies both roles of the procurator and the hospitaler according to Calvin’s statement on Romans 12:6-8: the former is charged with the financial and supervisory function for ‘the distribution of the public property of the Church’ and the latter takes charge of the administration and daily work of taking care of the sick in hospital.<sup>163</sup> Kingdon classifies these two types of deacons as

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<sup>158</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, pp.99-100, 103; Olson, “Calvin and Social-Ethical Issues”, p.164. See *Annales Calviniani* of 1547, ‘M. Calvin and the pastors have demonstrated that they have already given directions about the running of the hospital and the poor, both those of the town and subjects and other foreigners. However, it has come to their attention that the whole business is very badly run and poorly managed...when they see that the supplies are not put to proper use they feel betrayed. This is why it is necessary to sort out the affairs of the hospital and why the inventory of the said hospital should be carried out, and what is to be given to the hospital be left to the hospital and not taken by the lords of the manor nor put into public ownership [*bien publique*] unless what remained of the revenues of the said hospital were needed’, [my translation], CO 21:405.

<sup>159</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.103.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104.

<sup>161</sup> Olson, “Calvin and Social-Ethical Issues”, p.164. See *Ordonnances ecclésiastique* in Reid, *Theological Treaties*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp.64-66.

<sup>162</sup> Kingdon, “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, pp.216, 219.

<sup>163</sup> Olson, “Calvin and Social-Ethical Issues”, p.165. Regarding the origin of the double diaconate in Geneva, Kingdon argues that Calvin modelled it after the existing system of procurator and hospitaler of the hospital, and applied it in his interpretation of Romans 12:8. Meanwhile, Innes claims that Calvin’s double diaconate originated from Martin Butzer, while McKee suggests that it was the outcome of Calvin’s theological and exegetical study on the New Testament such as the Romans. See Robert Kingdon, “Calvin’s Ideas about the Diaconate: Social or Theological in Origin?” in *Piety, Politics, and Power: Reformation Studies in Honour of George Wolfgang Forell*,

procurators who ‘gather alms for the poor’ and hospitalers who ‘distribute these alms’.<sup>164</sup> As he notes, it is surprising to ascertain the procurators’ willing commitment and the full-time hospitalers’ assiduity in all their miscellaneous serving of the poor.<sup>165</sup> In particular, the Procurators, despite their own heavy professional, familial, and governmental duties, were discharged with difficult and persistent obligations including attending a weekly meeting on Sunday morning, making decisions on ‘every proposal’ regarding administration, finance, inspection, and ‘every single request from every poor family’, and managing both large and scattered real-estates and the staff allocated to the Hospital.<sup>166</sup>

Along with alms giving, the General Hospital had the additional functions of providing education for children by hired teachers, such as theology students, and offering medical treatment by barber-surgeons. With this in mind, one can perhaps suggest that the Consistory, discussed in Chapter Five, may be considered the institution that contributed indirectly to the formation of the philanthropic common good by its direct up-building of the spiritual common good of the church through preserving the morality of citizens. In contrast, the General Hospital is the institution that contributed indirectly to the spiritual common good of the church by its direct preservation of the philanthropic common good through protecting the basic economic rights of the poor.

Nevertheless, the poverty-stricken refugees who wanted to settle in Geneva permanently in light of its religious freedom were excluded from the institutional benefits of these social welfare systems, which were mainly enacted and run only for the common good of native citizens and transients in Geneva.<sup>167</sup> This Achilles’ heel of the General Hospital demonstrates that Geneva’s reformed social welfare system was stuck in the ‘considerable gap’ between its abilities to serve the community and the severe social problems caused by ‘this massive flux’ of immigrants. Thus, it was unable to contribute fully and effectively to the formation of the new philanthropic common good of an

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ed. Carter Lindberg (Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1984), p.178; William C. Innes, *Social Concern in Calvin’s Geneva*, (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1983), pp.105-7; Elsie Anne McKee, “Calvin’s Exegesis of Romans 12:8 – Social, Accidental, or Theological?”, *CTJ* 23.1 (1988), pp.6-18.

<sup>164</sup> Kingdon, “Social Welfare in Calvin’s Geneva”, p.60.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55-57; and “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, p.218.

<sup>166</sup> Kingdon, “Social Welfare in Calvin’s Geneva”, pp.55-57.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

internationalized Geneva during the Reformation era.<sup>168</sup> However, Bourse Française, the social welfare fund designed for foreign religious refugees, was presented as an alternative to this changing situation through the direct participation of Calvin and his Genevan Church.

### 6.3.3. The French Fund (the Bourse Française)

The *Bourse Française*, ‘French Fund’, or the *Bourse des pauvres étrangers français*, ‘Fund for Poor French Foreigners’, was not constructed primarily to help the simple physical need of the poor and thus contribute to their philanthropic common good, as was the case of the General Hospital. Rather, this French Fund was an important tool for protecting the spiritual common good of foreign refugees, who chose to risk physical adversity in order to defend their freedom of religious expression. The fund helped these refugees’ social settlement in Geneva.<sup>169</sup> According to Olson’s most extensive study of the French Fund, by the middle of the 1540s, the General Hospital could not cope with the demand for social welfare in Geneva on account of the ‘real floodtide of religious immigration into Geneva from France’.<sup>170</sup> This rapid demographic shift from the outflow of a Swiss Catholic majority to the subsequent increasingly significant influx of French Protestants also caused the city’s population to double during the Reformation period between 1542 and 1560.<sup>171</sup> There was an increase in political and social tensions between Genevan natives and the growing community of French refugees, as well as growing financial pressures, industrial competition, and sanitary issues, which eventually led to an outpouring of xenophobia and an attempt in 1545 by Genevan citizens to chase foreign refugees out of their city.<sup>172</sup>

Amidst this period of struggle, Bourse Française was founded shortly after 1545 by initial foundation funds, which consisted of ‘legacies such as those of David Busanton’,

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p.64; and “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, p.223.

<sup>169</sup> Kingdon, “Social Welfare in Calvin’s Geneva”, p.64; and “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, p.22; Jeannine E. Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare: Deacons and the Bourse française*, (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1989), p.24.

<sup>170</sup> Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare*, pp.24-25 and “Calvin and social-ethical issues”, p.165; Kingdon, “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, pp.223-25.

<sup>171</sup> Refers to Perrenoud, Louis Binz, and Michel Roget’s study. See Kingdon, “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, p.223; Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, p.105; Monter, *Calvin’s Geneva*, pp.21-22; Naphy, *Calvin and the Genevan Reformation*, pp.121-139.

<sup>172</sup> Kingdon, “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, p.223; Naphy, *Calvin and the Genevan Reformation*, pp.121-139; Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare*, p.34.

announced by Calvin to the city council in 1545, ‘acts of personal charity’, and the later organized ‘common fund’.<sup>173</sup> This means that the French Fund, unlike the General Hospital, was established after Calvin’s return to Geneva in 1541. Also, unlike the General Hospital’s management by the public funding of the city council, the French Fund was consistent with the public good of society in its unique role as private institution managed through donations made by wealthy refugees.<sup>174</sup>

The French Fund also may have been helped by Calvin’s preaching, which, as Fuchs notes, influenced the passing of new laws to organize the management of funds for public aid in the case of the diaconate and the organization of the General Hospital.<sup>175</sup> As Olson notes, the common goal of ‘the deacon’s three tasks’ was to activate the gift-sharing system in Geneva by receiving gifts, that is, both ‘donation from living people and inheritance from the dead’, disbursing gifts, and visiting the poor.<sup>176</sup> Through Olson’s analysis of the document on Jean Budé’s activity and will,<sup>177</sup> one can see how ‘the first generation of Protestant immigrants to Geneva’ participated in active donation to three main charitable institutions of the city, that is, the French Fund, the hospital, and the academy.<sup>178</sup> However, the growth of the French Fund was due to not only a few devotional rich people and their relatives within Geneva but also to the consistent common effort of the numerous reformed believers within and without Geneva, especially from France.<sup>179</sup> The later core matrix of this Fund was the international Reformed community.<sup>180</sup> The recipient group of this Fund was composed largely of women and

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<sup>173</sup> Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare*, pp.34-36.

<sup>174</sup> Kingdon, “Social Welfare in Calvin’s Geneva”, p.64; and “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, p.225.

<sup>175</sup> Eric Fuchs, “Calvin’s Ethics”, *John Calvin’s Impact on Church and Society, 1509-2009*, p.153.

<sup>176</sup> Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare*, p.72.

<sup>177</sup> Jean Budé (1515-87), an intimate supporter of Calvin and a central figure amongst the first generation of the French immigrant community, served Geneva as ambassador and city council member. He took part in the physical construction of the Genevan Academy, and is noted for the historical document of his enormous bequest to all three charitable institutions of Geneva: to the French Fund, he left six hundred florins, to the General Hospital, one hundred florins, and to the Genevan Academy, one hundred florins. See Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfares*, pp.148-155.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.153-55.

<sup>179</sup> Kingdon, “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, 226; Olson, “Calvin and Social-Ethical Issues”, p.166.

<sup>180</sup> Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare*, pp.157-160.

children (including widows and orphans), the sick, the disabled, unemployed men, and ‘important’ individuals.<sup>181</sup>

Nevertheless, this Fund was not only given for the ‘chronic poor’ but also for the accommodation needs in Geneva of the ‘shamefaced poor, those who had been prosperous and had fallen on hard times’. These early recipients later became donors, as shown in the will of Didier Rousseau in 1570.<sup>182</sup> The deaconate, by actively encouraging ‘a productive work ethic’,<sup>183</sup> operated the French Fund in order to enable recipients to support themselves, rather than supporting them to remain passively reliant on others: assistance could take the form of money, housing, food, grain, clothing, beds and mattresses, tools or fees for apprenticeship training, loans, wet-nurses, and medical services.<sup>184</sup> In addition, the ‘theological peculiarities’ of this French Fund, whilst distinguishing between the truly and deserving needy and the undeserving indigent, required the recipient to demonstrate proper courtesy through their ‘exemplary behaviour’ and practical commitments, compliance to Protestant rules, and an expected show gratitude for given gifts.<sup>185</sup> Thus, the French Fund adopted a new system, which formed a channel for reciprocal gift giving from the self-supporting recipient to the poor; this replaced the older system, which encouraged simple gift giving from the rich to the (constantly) poor recipient.

In addition, the French Fund was a new practical tool to bring about an ‘actual change’ from the old Catholic ‘psychological motivation’ of gift giving, in which the ‘incentive of giving alms to the poor to merit eternal reward’ functioned as a decisive contribution to the laying of the common good of the Roman Church.<sup>186</sup> The French Fund in comparison, as in the case of the General Hospital, worked by harnessing believers’ voluntary<sup>187</sup> participation in their generous exchange of gifts of grace through the

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p.177; Olson, “The Care of the Poor in Calvin’s Geneva”, presented in the conference of ‘Calvin and Society’ in Seoul, 2008, p.13; David Hall, *Calvin the Public Square*, pp.107-110.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., pp.103, 133-134; and “Calvin and Social-Ethical Issues”, pp.166-67.

<sup>183</sup> David Hall, *Calvin in the Public Square*, pp.110-1.

<sup>184</sup> Olson, “The Bourse Française: Deacon and Social Welfare in Calvin’s Geneva”, *PTR* (1982) p.21; Kingdon, “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, pp.226-27; David Hall, *Calvin in the Public Square*, pp.110-1.

<sup>185</sup> Olson, “The Care of the Poor in Calvin’s Geneva”, p.14; Hall, *Calvin in the Public Square*, pp.110-1.

<sup>186</sup> Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare*, p.176.

<sup>187</sup> Calvin clearly states that ‘there should be an equality...by the rich spontaneously and liberally relieving the wants of their brethren, and not grudgingly or of necessity’, John Calvin, *Four Last Books of the Pentateuch*, Exodus 16:17, in David Little, “Economic Justice and the Grounds for a



psychological motivations of justification and sanctification. Thus, one can say that the French Fund became the most ideal, practical, and historical model of Calvin's theology of reciprocal gift sharing for the common good of the Reformed church. In addition, the level of the social common good pursued by Calvin's French Fund was a new systemized actualization of mutual support that went beyond the older level of voluntary but beneficial charity.

The French Fund was not only limited to physical charity in Geneva, but also became involved in other non-charitable evangelical ministries through *both* the publication of Calvin's lectures and sermons, a new Psalter, and other religious books in France, *and* the support of pastors and their families assigned from Geneva to France.<sup>188</sup> Thus, the French Fund also worked towards the spiritual common good of the church beyond Geneva through the spreading of the Reformed gospel throughout Europe. In addition, though the French Fund was intended for French Protestant refugees, its initial records showed that it was used flexibly and universally for many other ethnic communities including native Genevans, Jews, and Turks.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, parallel funds were founded in Geneva by many refugees of non-French origin including Italians, English, and German-speaking peoples.<sup>190</sup> Thus, historical records appear to suggest that Calvin and the French refugees' fund contributed to the spiritual, physical, and political welfare of immigrants in Geneva and those persecuted in France and Europe. This fund was therefore a breakthrough to a new chapter in the common good of both church and humankind, through its promotion of public charity using a 'mutually supportive' network that extended beyond ethnic, national, and geographical barriers.<sup>191</sup>

Calvin made a profound contribution to the French Fund through various activities, such as regular and generous gifts from his salary with his Genevan pastorate's donations, his direct involvement in the initial formation of the Fund, and his recommendations to the

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Theory of Progressive Taxation in Calvin's Thought", in *Reformed Faith and Economics*, ed. Robert Stivers (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1989), p.77.

<sup>188</sup> Kingdon, "Calvinism and Social Welfare", p.227.

<sup>189</sup> Kingdon, "Calvinism and Social Welfare", pp.227-28; Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare*, pp.177-78.

<sup>190</sup> Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare*, pp.177-78; Kingdon, "Calvinism and Social Welfare", pp.227-28.

<sup>191</sup> McKee, "Calvin's Teaching on Social and Economic Issues" in *John Calvin Rediscovered*, pp.18-21.

deacons of the fund concerning ‘particular individuals or projects’.<sup>192</sup> In Calvin’s mind, whilst the General Hospital for native Genevans was already managed by reliable and competitive deacons for the philanthropic common good, it was urgent that the social needs of foreign refugees, excluded from the social protection of Geneva, were addressed. Thus, one can suggest that this is why Calvin could not leave this Fund to the management of deacons or the city council, but was more active in his own pastoral guidance along with that of his colleagues from both the company of pastors and the devotional deacons under his leadership.<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, one can posit that another reason Calvin was closer to the French Fund than the General Hospital is because the French Fund was a ‘flexible and innovative’ institution for the up-building of the common good of church and society. For, it played a new social role through its distribution of material resources for refugees and also took a new spiritual role through its distribution of evangelical resources within and without Geneva.<sup>194</sup>

In sum, the General Hospital was the product of the reformation of the old social welfare facilities based on the Roman Church’s theology of meritorious alms giving, and was formed and settled under the leadership of the city council in 1535, before Calvin’s activity in Geneva. However, through Calvin’s theology of the diaconate, the hospital’s social relief activity was able to recover the spiritual role of the early apostolic church.<sup>195</sup> In other words, the General Hospital contributed indirectly to the spiritual common good by its greater emphasis on the philanthropic common good. In comparison, the French Fund can be regarded as a new dynamic product of both social welfare and evangelization based on the Reformed Church’s innovative theology of gifts of grace. It was established soon after 1545 under the practical impact of Calvin’s theological theory of the common good of the church, already shown in his second edition of the *Institutes* in 1541. Thus, one can say that the French Fund contributed both to building the philanthropic common good towards refugees within Geneva and to building the spiritual common good of the Reformed believers beyond Geneva.

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<sup>192</sup> Kingdon, “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, 226, 228; Olson, “Calvin and Social-Ethical Issues”, p.166.

<sup>193</sup> Kingdon, “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, p.228; and “Social Welfare in Calvin’s Geneva”, p.64.

<sup>194</sup> Kingdon, “Calvinism and Social Welfare”, p.230.

<sup>195</sup> *Sermons on 1 Timothy*, 3:6-7.

## Conclusions

This chapter began by exploring Calvin's distinctive notion that common grace is not used by itself for the construction of the common good of humankind within this present life, but is also associated with special grace, used for the spiritual common good of the kingdom of God for the eternal life. With the assumption of his three-layered notion of the common good (cosmos, humankind, church), Calvin appears to stress that, in order for natural gifts to be used rightly for the common good at both the spiritual and social level, they cannot be used independently of supernatural gifts.

This chapter continues to apply Calvin's notion of common grace at both spiritual and physical levels to his theory and practice of economics and social welfare in relation to the common good of society and church. First of all, the economic system, as a divine original order established by cheerful and fair communications, was found to be an indispensable mode for the preservation of the social common good of all humankind. Calvin's notion of the economic common good is manifested at both spiritual and social levels by his dynamic views on the different nature of physical resources depending on the different stages of salvation. For instance, labour, as both a spiritual and communal activity, was carried out in cheerfulness before the Fall, but this ease was lost after the Fall, when labour became a painful activity. The pleasure of work for the common good was only recovered through redemption in Christ, restoring in humanity a sense of spiritual dignity. In this manner, Calvin believes that wages should be regarded as a free exchange of divine gifts. It is within Calvin's notion of commerce that his ideas on the common good both at a spiritual and social level can be most clearly seen, for he recognises commerce as being a fair distribution of divine gifts not only for the common benefit of all but also for the glory of God. Thus, Calvin evaluates interest on loans from the perspective of both right and effective circulation of spiritual and social goodness for the common benefit of all.

Finally, this chapter has examined how Calvin attempts to apply his theology of charity by seeking free, cheerful, and voluntary gift-sharing within his ministerial practise in Geneva. This is clearly shown in the historical case of the General Hospital and the French Fund, both of which demonstrate his reformed model of the reciprocal gift-giving system, which is regulated and performed by the association of the spiritual and social common good.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **7.1. Summary**

Throughout this work, we have explored Calvin's understanding of the term 'the common good' by expounding its theological grounding in order to understand the theological foundation for ecclesial and social applications. We have shown that Calvin's notion of the common good, as a reflection of divine goodness, is dealt with not simply at the moral and humanistic level but also at the spiritual and biblical level: he often prefers to link the ethical term 'the common good' with his religious language, such as 'the glory of God' and 'salvation', through his writing. Moreover, we have found that Calvin bears in mind that, in order for the above multiple levels of the common good to be fully realized, the Trinitarian participation of Christians united in Christ is more decisive than the general participation of humankind associated in society. Thus, this thesis has argued that, on the one hand, Calvin's three doctrines concerning special grace, namely God's image in Christ, Sanctification focusing on the Christian's self-denial and freedom, and the third use of the Law, can be understood together as constituting the main collaborating facets of the theological foundation of his notion of the common good, not only at a divine level but also at a moral level. On the other hand, this thesis has given voice to the fact that Calvin's three doctrines concerning universal grace, namely God's image remaining in humankind, the second use of the Law (and the natural law) contained in the Decalogue, and the common grace given to all in the form of natural gifts, should be also understood as constituting another crucial but supplementary collaborating facet of the same theological foundation. In Calvin's mind, these two different approaches are distinctive but inseparable in shaping his theology of the common good at both spiritual and social levels based on a Christ-centred ontological participation. Thus, we may conclude that the theological backdrop to Calvin's twofold notion of the common good in church and state is shaped by his multiple thoughts on three key themes: the image of God, sanctification, and the use of the Law.

This thesis has also demonstrated that Calvin applied the above three theological foundations, God's image, sanctification, and Law, not only to his theories but also to his practical activities with relation to both the spiritual and social common good of church

and society in Geneva. Through the analysis not only of the ecclesial common good found in the spiritual gifts, prayer, sacrament, office, and property, but also of the social common good found in the natural gifts, politics,<sup>1</sup> economy, and social welfare, we may conclude that, in Calvin's applied theories and activities in the mutual relationship between church and state, the relational virtues such as willingness, moderation, collegiality, and mutual subjection are more important to the realisation of gift-sharing for the common good in Geneva than the substantial gifts found within members of the community and their systemized legalistic duty.

## 7.2. Evaluation

The sixteenth-century was a time of division regarding the value of the common good, with Catholics, Protestants, and Anabaptists each having their own understanding of the common good, leading to conflict. This conflict surrounding the value of the common good can be understood as being deeply related to 'a quarrel about gifts' in the religious reformations of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> This thesis, however, did not deal with the historical strife originating from competitive dissimilarity amongst different religious understandings of the common good as the good life or 'visions of the full human good'.<sup>3</sup> Rather, through a focused analysis on Calvin's theological understanding of the common good and its social and ethical implications, the discussion has attempted to introduce his systematic and pioneering portrayal of the Reformation's image of the common good in the sixteenth-century.

In addition, this thesis has tried to illustrate how Calvin's thoughts on the common good are in complete opposition to the Roman Church's doctrine of the common good of the church based on the exchange of meritorious and commercial gifts. Also, whilst noting some apparent similarities, the discussion here has sought to show how Calvin's idea of the common good, founded on gifts of grace placed in union with Christ, can be seen to be different from Aquinas' idea of the common good, founded on the twofold structure of grace and nature. Moreover, Calvin's common good does not remain only within the

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Davis discusses how the theological difference regarding gifts, between the Catholic's 'reciprocity' and Calvin's 'gratuitousness', is inter-related with the historically contrasting forms of 'relations accompanying gift exchange' between France and Geneva, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, pp.100-123.

humanistic idea of the common good based on Aristotle and the Stoics' pantheism. At the same time, Calvin's common good is completely different from the Anabaptist's notion of collective property, which may lead to the injury of the gift system itself as a reciprocal being.

Moreover, this thesis has discussed how Calvin's thought on the common good is built on the close interrelatedness between the ontological and practical level of the gifts of grace based on the Reformed theological-anthropology, established by his threefold understanding of the image of God and the doctrine of union with Christ. In addition, there has been an attempt to show how both the spiritual and physical dimension of gifts of grace are woven together by multiple and dynamic shaping of the three stages of humankind's salvation. In sum, the crucial purpose has been to demonstrate how the value of the common good within the original order of creation is embodied at the divine and moral level, the relational and substantial level, the ontological and practical level and the spiritual and physical level. Most importantly, this embodiment is realized by the cheerful and mutual manner in which the gifts of grace are shared within the collaborative relationship between church and society through the participation of the believer united with Christ. The arguments laid out in each chapter serve to illustrate how the common good of the church can be a transformative and consummative tool to restore and realize the original communal order of God in the world, where the common good of humankind remains as a partial reflection of the moral, substantial, practical, and physical dimension through common grace and natural law.

Thus, through the multiple analysis of both the spiritual and social level of Calvin's theology of the common good, one can hopefully discern why both modern gift-theologians' coercive and unilateral understanding and Weber's individual and capitalistic understanding of Calvin's gifts cannot properly encapsulate Calvin's notion of the common good as God's original order within both spiritual and social economy. This thesis has examined Calvin's point that both the divine and moral value of the common good can be wholly restored only by the gift-exchange through believers who are in union with God by the Spirit.

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<sup>3</sup> Hollenbach, p.14.

Considering the above discussion, one may find that Calvin's notion of the common good connotes four popular categories in the modern understanding of the common good, such as the utilitarian 'general welfare', 'public interests' as the universal protection of the individual's right, 'public goods' as the shared external materials, and the classical 'common good' as the relational and communal being. However, Calvin's ideas of the common good move to a more in-depth understanding: the consummative and double restoration of the original order in creation at both the spiritual and social level through the Trinitarian participation of believers in God's gifts of grace. Thus, it is manifest that, for Calvin, though the human community which shares God's image may reflect partially the value of the common good as the relational being, the community of believers united with Christ is able to realize it wholly within the loci of Christ-centred or Trinitarian anthropology. Thus, this thesis has attempted to show that, for Calvin, both the triune God's work of creation and redemption and the responsive participation of believers united in Christ by the Spirit is the matrix in which the value of the common good is mutually and dynamically realized both at divine and moral, spiritual and physical, evangelical and humanistic, and individual and communal levels. Thus, one may conclude that, for Calvin, the economic dimension of 'general welfare' is analyzed not quantitatively but qualitatively and spiritually. The modern 'public interest' acquired by the fundamental protection of the individual right is dealt with not in the humanistic-anthropological dimension but in the theological-anthropological dimension; that is, Calvin's doctrine of God's image in humanity. Modern 'public goods' defined as shared external materials, and 'public good' as a social core value, are analyzed from Calvin's perspective of special grace in God's redemption more so than from his perspective of common grace in God's creation. The classical 'common good' as the relational being can be dealt with, to some degree, by his humanistic notion, but this can only be fully achieved by his theology of participation of gifts of grace in union with Christ by the Spirit.

The aim of this thesis has been to provide a systematic theological analysis of Calvin's idea of the common good, based on a reading of his *Institutes*, commentaries, sermons, and letters. The intention has been to lay out Calvin's multi-faceted thinking on 'the common good', to illuminate the strong theological rationale that underpins his social, economic and ecclesial thought.

## **APPENDIX**

### **CALVIN'S POLITICAL COMMON GOOD**

This Appendix will discuss the way in which Calvin's vision of the original order in terms of the common good is influential on his political thought. In particular, it will consider how the mutual relation between the spiritual common good and the social common good unfolds within his political thought. This study is crucial, first of all, because regardless of the 'categorical denial'<sup>1</sup> of the modern pertinence of Calvin's political ideas,<sup>2</sup> these ideas can be still regarded as valid within political theology because, as Noelliste notes, 'Calvin belabours the point that the purpose of civil government is the pursuit of the public good'.<sup>3</sup> Calvin suggests that politics is God's gift given to humankind in their sinful nature, whether believers or not, in order to provide tranquillity for the good and to preserve humankind from destruction.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, political thought based upon Calvin's common-good-centred-perspective is not limited to being merely a 'historical and inspirational' artefact, but could also be regarded as a source with some practical relevance for today's Majority World (much more than the Western World).<sup>5</sup>

In order to explore this subject, this section will focus on the ways in which Calvin's notion of 'the common good' illuminates his thoughts on civil order.

To begin with, it is necessary to investigate the debate between Calvin scholars with regard to the origin and nature of politics. One may divide these scholarly approaches into two categories: a divine gift after or before the Fall. As the proponent of the former view, Kuyper interprets Calvin's political view as suggesting that if humanity had not fallen into

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Hancock, *Calvin and the Foundation of Politics*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp.1-8.

<sup>2</sup> Dieumeme Noelliste, "Exploring the Usefulness of Calvin's Socio-Political Ethics for the Majority World" in *John Calvin and Evangelical Theology*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), pp.219-20. According to Skinner's modern political theory, since the state has 'no rivals as an object of allegiance', the church is isolated and excluded from the political realm. See *The Foundation of Modern Political Thought*, pp.351-52; see also Paul Marshall, "Calvin, Politics, and Political Science", in *Calvin and Culture*, pp.145-56.

<sup>3</sup> Noelliste, p.235.

<sup>4</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 13:3, p.480; 4.20.4. Hancock states that 'although Calvin agrees with Augustine that the political order is a remedy for sin, he also insists that government is not only necessary but noble, he gives politics a much higher status than did Augustine', *the Foundation of Politics*, p.29.

<sup>5</sup> 'Majority World' is the preferred term for the designation of the non-Western part of the world. See Noelliste, "Calvin's Socio-Political Ethics", pp.221, 232.



sin, there would have been no politics to include ‘the institution of the state with its magistrates’;<sup>6</sup> after the Fall, God gave politics as common grace for their protection and well-being.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Chenevière maintains that for Calvin, politics is not regarded as the product of human nature in creation but ‘the sense of the social life is God’s gift [*un don de Dieu*], which belongs to the common grace [*la grace commune*]’ after the Fall.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, some scholars propose that Calvin saw politics as a divine gift before the Fall. For example, Meeter argues that, for Calvin, ‘the state is a natural formation’, which arises, on the one side, from ‘a social impulse’ or the ‘cohesive social instinct’, and on the other side, from ‘a providential arrangement of God’ for ‘the promotion of the common interests and the general welfare of the group, and for the administration of justice’, even before the Fall.<sup>9</sup> In a similar vein, Copleston points out that, for Aquinas as for Aristotle, the state is ‘a natural institution, founded on the nature of man’ before the Fall, and there is ‘an authority to care for the common good’, since humanity is ‘by nature a social or political being, born to live in community with his fellows’.<sup>10</sup>

Rather than selecting only one of these different viewpoints, this section will take an integrated position; that is, for Calvin, the origin of the state is rooted in God’s incessant care and intervention both before and after the Fall. Given that the function and form of a government may alter according to its historical context, Calvin believes that politics, in its purest form, for the common good of all people is absolutely necessary, regardless of the Fall, ‘if the pilgrimage requires such helps’.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Calvin’s understanding of humanity as the image of God explains the existence and direction of politics in terms of the happiness and welfare of the individual and the whole human community. In other words, whilst acknowledging the two theological compositions – the knowledge of God and humanity – that are intrinsic in Calvin’s political thought, this section will attempt to demonstrate his understanding of the politics of the common good in relation to

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<sup>6</sup> Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, p.81.

<sup>7</sup> Regarding this, Augustine shows a notion that ‘the state is the result of original sin’. See Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol. II, Medieval Philosophy Augustine to Scotus*, (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne LTD, 1959), p.415.

<sup>8</sup> Marc-Edouard Chenevière, *La Pensée Politique de Calvin*, p.117. [My translation.]

<sup>9</sup> Meeter, *The Basic Idea of Calvinism*, pp.78-79.

<sup>10</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol. II*, pp.413-14.

<sup>11</sup> 4.20.2.

republicanism.<sup>12</sup> This will be done by adopting a synchronic analysis, carrying out comparative study of *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia* (1532) and the *Institutes* (1536 and 1559).

### **The common good in Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia***

To begin with, it is important to investigate how Calvin's humanistic and philosophical backdrop establishes the primary shape of his thoughts on the political common good within his *Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia* (1532). For Seneca, the virtue of clemency is useful not only when it is oriented toward 'man as a social animal, begotten for the common good [*hominem sociale animal communi bono genitum*]' but also for those who pursue 'their own advantage [*ad vtilitatem suam*]'.<sup>13</sup> Here, Calvin introduces the Stoics, who attach highest value to humanity's shared life of solidarity for the common good, as forming a crucial backdrop for Seneca's thought on the common good. Meanwhile, he contrasts them with the Epicureans and Cyrenaics, whose outlook on society focuses on individual advantage such as 'their [own] pleasure'.<sup>14</sup> As Calvin notes, Seneca regards clemency as the prime virtue to harmonize communal value with individual value. Nevertheless, in light of Calvin's subsequent statements to support the proponents of 'the public good [*in commune*]',<sup>15</sup> one may infer that Calvin attempts to elaborate on Seneca's original thoughts in *De Clementia* in order to show that they must be understood within the context of communal purpose over individual usefulness.

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<sup>12</sup> McNeil understands the republicanism as Calvin's formula of the aristocratic democracy or the conservative democracy. In John McNeil, *John Calvin and God and Political Duty*, (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1956), xx-xxiv.

<sup>13</sup> *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia*, book I chapter 3, p.77.

<sup>14</sup> There are commonalities between Socrates' universal virtue and knowledge and Plato's *summum bonum*. According to Plato, the society governed by a man of wisdom is the society where *summum arête* and *summum bonum* are realized; therefore all people enjoy happiness. See W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. 4: Plato the Man and His Dialogues-Earlier Period*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp.32-33; Ernest Barker, *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, (London: Peter Smith, 1979), p.59. Aristotle's politics, like Plato, explore the individual good and the social good, that is, the good of humanity. However, Aristotle, whilst assuming that political science treats 'the highest "good" of man', gives his priority to the good of the state more than to the good of the individual. Thus, he states that 'this result is impossible to the individual without the association of his fellows – that is, without the πόλις. Therefore, the good of the individual is merged in that of the state'. See W. A. Dunning, *A History of Political Theories: Ancient and Medieval*, (New York: The Macmillan, 1975), pp.49-53. In a similar vein, Aquinas suggests 'a utilitarian foundation' in the sense that 'the common good is better than the good of the individual'. See Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol. II*, pp.414, 418; *S.T.*, IIa, IIae, 47, 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia*, pp.85.

According to Calvin, Plato and Aristotle give comparable voice to this precept. For Plato, reason is given for the formation of ‘social ties’, both within small units of friends and family and within the whole human community by producing ‘conformity of character, of language and habit’ in them.<sup>16</sup> For Aristotle, ‘man is by nature a civil and social animal...they strive after commonalty of life’.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in line with these philosophers, Calvin expounds how Seneca’s thoughts on being ‘begotten for the common good [*communi bono genitum*],’ are based upon the organic philosophical anthropology that ‘mankind has been created for mutual assistance’, as shown in Seneca’s book *On Anger* [1.5.2].<sup>18</sup>

Thus, given Calvin’s humanistic and philosophical viewpoint shown above, one may suggest that his republican concept of the public good can be understood as relating to ‘the common good for the whole society and the good of the common people’; it does not merely concern ‘the governmental matter’ that is related to the public office holder.<sup>19</sup>

What, then, is the character of Calvin’s theology of the common good as found in his Commentary on Seneca’s *On Clemency*? First of all, relational virtue is more decisively significant than substantial endowment in order to establish public values such as political stability and community peace. Thus, when the princes serve ‘the common good [*communi bono*],’ with their relational virtue, their political power will be more stable than were they to pursue their own private ‘advantage’ with their substantial talent ‘in other endowments of fortune, of body, or of mind’.<sup>20</sup> Here, one may suggest that this priority commonly appears both in Calvin’s earlier humanistic views regarding the political

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.85.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.85. See Pol. [3.6,1278b19].

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.85.

<sup>19</sup> Raymond Geuss classifies the term ‘public’ as follows: (1) governmental matters such as ‘the realm within which authority and power are held’; and (2) communal matters such as ‘the origin or source of legitimacy of power or authority’, which derives ‘from the whole people’. Raymond Geuss, *Public Goods, Private Goods*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp.42-43. See also Se-Hyoung Yi, “John Calvin’s Ambiguity and His Democratic Republicanism”, presented at the UW-Madison Political Philosophy Colloquium, March 2010, pp.12-13.

<sup>20</sup> *Calvin’s Commentary on Seneca’s De Clementia*, pp.87, 89. Regarding the priority of the relational virtue such as humility rather than the splendid substantial talents, in 1550, Calvin writes that ‘You [Somerset] know, my lord, what was written about this holy king Hezekiah – that after having done many great things, both for religion and in the service of God, as well as for the common good of the country [*le bien commun du pays*], his heart grew proud. If God has decided to stop you from becoming too proud, this is a great gift that he has given you’, [my translation], CO 13:530.

virtuous life and his later theological thoughts on the sanctified virtuous life. Secondly, Seneca stresses that individualistic interests should be protected in ways that are in harmony with communal interests, as maintained in his phrase, ‘for the safety of each and all’, which is a given voice in line with Plato and Cicero.<sup>21</sup> Thirdly, with his understanding of Seneca’s assumption of the ruler and state as an organic solidarity,<sup>22</sup> Calvin explains Seneca’s metaphor of rulers as ‘the soul of the state’ and the state as ‘the body’ of rulers in relation to the formation of the political common good through the reciprocal circulation of the leader’s clemency and subjects’ obedience. Thus, the prince’s ‘public affection’ must be reckoned as political goods to be exchanged for subjects’ loyalty; for, as Seneca notes, ‘the price of security is an interchange of security’, and Calvin clarifies that ‘the prince can be promised security by all provided he keeps all secure’.<sup>23</sup> Fourthly, in Calvin’s study on Seneca, one can find that the best form of the polity is always linked to the value of the common good. Seneca states that rulers’ ‘true clemency’, composed of both ‘self-control and an inclusive love of the human race’ – the highest virtues for the common good – is evaluated as the clearest criterion differentiating between ‘a tyrant and a king’.<sup>24</sup> With this in mind, Calvin intends to demonstrate, in line with Aristotle, that the value of the common good ought to be the ultimate standard used to differentiate good politics such as ‘kingship’, ‘aristocracy’, and ‘republic’ from bad politics such as ‘tyranny’, ‘oligarchy’, and ‘ochlocracy’.<sup>25</sup> Thus, from the beginning, one can see that Calvin is not so much concerned with the political system *per se*, but rather its efficiency with regards the common good as an immutable political goal.

### **The common good in the *Institutes***

How, then, did the major elements of Calvin’s earlier humanistic philosophy of the common good in his commentary on Seneca’s *On Clemency* develop within his later biblical theology of the common good that appeared in his *Institutes* of 1536 and 1559?<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp.87-89.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp.97-105.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp.111, 285-86, cited by Calvin in p.285.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp.193, 201.

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, *Pol.* [3.5.2, 1279a-b9], quoted in Calvin, Ibid., p.193.

<sup>26</sup> Calvin entreats the politics of religious clemency in his prefatory address to King Francis I of France (1536), which is associated with the political clemency shown in his works on Seneca’s *De Clementia* (1532).

## The civil and ecclesial order: designed for God's order

Calvin utilizes the theological metaphor of the soul and the flesh in order to distinguish and connect the 'spiritual government' and the 'civil government'.<sup>27</sup> Here, for Calvin, the civil order, along with the ecclesial order, is presented as a model of 'a communal, participatory vision of human flourishing'.<sup>28</sup> Thus, one may suggest that, in his *Institutes*, the most significant premise in Calvin's theology of the political common good is the comprehensive application of his 'passion for order'<sup>29</sup> within church and state. Wolin suggests that 'the general concept of order was a premise common to both religious and political society'.<sup>30</sup> In line with this, Höpfl stresses 'Calvin's conviction that both church and state exist for *aedificatio* of the believers'.<sup>31</sup> Here, the term *aedificatio* is regarded as a common ethical mode to realize God's original order of the two kingdoms, like the two 'independent but cooperating arms of God'.<sup>32</sup>

In a similar vein, Biéler argues that 'both the religious life and the material life of believers are subject to the same divine order'.<sup>33</sup> Thus, one can see that, as the ecclesial 'order' is required for the spiritual common good, so the 'order'<sup>34</sup> of the state is necessary for the political common good: 'some form of organization is necessary in all human society to foster the common peace and maintain concord...This ought especially to be observed in churches'.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, unlike Luther,<sup>36</sup> Calvin stresses both the impact of the

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<sup>27</sup> 4.20.1-2.

<sup>28</sup> See Billings, "Participation", p.235.

<sup>29</sup> Josef Bohatec, *Calvin*, quoted in Paul Marshall, "Calvin, Politics, and Political Science", p.149.

<sup>30</sup> S. Wolin, "Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation", in *WPT* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), pp.179-80.

<sup>31</sup> W. Fred Graham, "Recent Studies in Calvin's Political, Economic and Social Thought and Impact", in *In Honor of John Calvin, 1509-64*, (Montreal: McGill University, 1987), p.363.

<sup>32</sup> Leith, *the Christian Life*, p.210. Calvin's idea of two kingdoms 'lies closest to Bucer's idea of the two different shepherds under the one shepherd, Jesus Christ'; however, it is notable that Calvin's emphasis is put on 'the internal and eschatological aspects' of church and kingdom, in contrast to Bucer's emphasis on 'the external entourage of the church and kingdom'. See Willem Van't Spijker, "The Kingdom of Christ According to Bucer and Calvin", p.121.

<sup>33</sup> Biéler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*, p.135.

<sup>34</sup> CO 53:220, *Sermons on 1 Timothy*. 2:12-14, 'He [God] wanted to do good to the vulnerable in society when He created a system of law and order. So, when judges are given this honour, they should think about the objectives outlined here by St Paul – that they should study the natural order, that they should understand that God has put them in His place for the purpose of serving the common good [*a ceste fin, que nous servions au bien commun*]' . [My translation.]

<sup>35</sup> *Inst* (1536), Ch 6.32, pp.281-82.

church on the state and the proactive and positive role of the state for the kingdom of God.<sup>37</sup> This opinion decisively contributes to his argument that the various branches of the social common good, such as political, economical, and ethical orders, can be realized through the interaction of church and state.<sup>38</sup> In light of this, Monter evaluates, through his historical study of security, commerce, industry, refugee management, employment, and various social welfare regulations, that Calvin's Geneva (1555-1564) was a divinely ordered society, whilst realizing the harmonious balance between spiritual and secular power.<sup>39</sup>

### **The mutual utility of the public office**

Calvin focuses on 'utility'<sup>40</sup> by considering magistrates as God's gift for 'the public good' in a way that is 'restricted to the wellbeing of their subjects'.<sup>41</sup> This civil authority, as a sacred gift designed for the public good of society,<sup>42</sup> is of the same 'true' pattern and end as Christ's servanthood; that is, it is God's gift given for building up the spiritual

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<sup>36</sup> Luther regards 'the legitimacy and necessity of government in the world' as 'essentially peripheral' since 'the sword is ordained by God outside the perfection of Christ', which is central for 'the evangelical good life'. See Höpfl, *the Christian Polity*, pp.45, 253.

<sup>37</sup> See H. Wayne House, *Christian Ministries and the Law*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), pp.34-37.

<sup>38</sup> There are two camps concerning whether Calvin believed that political obligation or religious obligation was more important, with Hall and McNeil arguing that Calvin prioritizes political duty for the public good over religious duty, and Niesel and Keddie claiming that religious duty is more crucial. See Niesel, *Calvin*, p.233; Gordon J. Keddie, "Calvin on Civil Government", *SBET* 3 (1985), p.46; Charles Hall, *With the Spirit's Sword*, (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968), p.159; McNeil, "John Calvin on Civil Government", p.33.

<sup>39</sup> Monter, *Calvin's Geneva*, pp.88-89. Regarding this, it is noteworthy that Calvin's concept of the common good is 'under the eschatological shadow', and the true and ultimate achievement of the common good 'always lies beyond history' in that 'history may contribute to the highest human good, but it does not contain it'. Leith, *The Christian Life*, p.211.

<sup>40</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 13:3, p.480.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 13:4, p.481.

<sup>42</sup> CO 25:635, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*. 1:9-15 of 1555, 'he [Moses] didn't try to abuse his power but recognized that God had given him authority for the common good [*Dieu l'avoit obligé au bien commun*]. Therefore, Moses had authority and recognized that God wanted to put him in authority over the people, but he was not to abuse his privileges or rights, rather he was to give everything back to the people', [my translation], see also CO 26:75; CO 34: 656, *Sermons on the book of Job*, Ch 31, 'Kings and princes should not flatter themselves to think that the world was created for them, rather, they were created for the common people. Did God not establish principalities and kingdoms for the common good [*Dieu n'a-il pas établi les principautés et les royaumes pour le bien commun*]?''. [My translation.]

common good.<sup>43</sup> Calvin suggests that church and state, as the gifts of grace given for the glory of God and the good of humanity, have a mutual and common concern for society.<sup>44</sup> In Calvin's idea of 'the common well-being', the common nature as God's image enables one to see the relation between the governor and the governed in light of the voluntary mutual subjection.<sup>45</sup> Thus, Marshall states that 'Calvin's stress on equality necessarily comports with his emphasis on voluntariness and human responsibility'.<sup>46</sup> In other words, Calvin implies that 'the true function of the ruler is to reflect the appearance of the image of God', since political status is given as a divine condition for the public good of all.<sup>47</sup> Thus, not only the governed but also the governors ought to participate in their willing submission toward each other: it is the mutual assistance or dependence brought about by the perfect bond of love.<sup>48</sup> This interchange of willingness based upon 'mutual assistance'

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<sup>43</sup> 4.20.4; *Inst.* (1536), 6.54, p.305. See Calvin's letter to the king of Navarre in 1561, CO 19:202, he writes that 'whatever happens, Lord, depending on whether you [King of Navarre] remain faithful to the end, we hope that affairs will be in as perfect a possible state that it will be possible to create prosperity and peace for the King and to work for the common good of the country of France [*la prosperite et repoz du Roy, et le bien commun du pais de France*]. We also plead with you to add to this your zeal and burning love in order to put bread out and that God be glorified through the open rejection of all superstition and idolatry, thereby showing yourself to be a protector of the poor church, ensuring that it will no longer be subject to such harsh persecution'. [My translation.]

<sup>44</sup> Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, pp.60-64.

<sup>45</sup> CO 51:732, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 5:18-21, 'Judges who are higher-placed and more renowned than the others are duty-bound to those they must govern, because they have not been awarded the position of judge for their own good, but for the common good [*car ils ne sont pas instituez pour leurs personnes, mais pour le bien commun*]. God did not create principalities and kingdoms and the rule of law just so that some people could have a higher status than others...it is sure that they are subject to those whom they serve by being in authority over them', [my translation]; CO 25:639, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, 1:16-18, 'they [those who are in leadership positions] have duties towards them and are subject to constraints. God did not create principalities/kingdoms that are desired by only a few, for all of humankind to be ruled over by them – he created them for the common good [*mais c'est pour tout le bien commun*]. Therefore, if governors and leaders do not understand that by the will of God and the natural order of things they have duties towards those under their care, they will be held accountable before God for having abused His grace and the honour that He bestowed on them', [my translation]; Wallace mentions the correlation between the communal image of God and the 'mutual communication and subjection within the order of nature' in *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp.149-169. The theological basis of this voluntary mutual subjection is already discussed in chapter 4 related to the third use of the Law in Christ and Christian freedom. Also, this topic was examined in the previous section on the economic principle for the common good.

<sup>46</sup> Marshall, "Calvin, Politics, and Political Science", p.152.

<sup>47</sup> Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.161; 4.20.24.

<sup>48</sup> *Sermons on Ephesians*, 5:18-21, pp.561-62.

or 'servitude' is the essential element in uncovering the basis of Calvin's political anthropology.<sup>49</sup>

### **The state's twofold responsibilities designed for the common good**

According to Hancock, Calvin believed that government 'enables man not only to live but to live well', that is, 'living according to "humanity" and living according to true religion'.<sup>50</sup> Calvin's rigorous distinction between spiritual and political teaching is due to his attempts to 'join' them fast together, both being rooted in the divine providential order.<sup>51</sup> Thus, in light of this twofold kingdom for humankind,<sup>52</sup> although the church must be the central place for the display of the spiritual common good based upon voluntary obedience, 'the state must in fact serve ends that are common to the church' <sup>53</sup> in its positive use of the Commandments. As Gatis notes, Calvin believes that whilst church and state as united and reciprocal religious forces have 'a symbiosis of purpose' to protect people by opposing Evil,<sup>54</sup> that is, 'the common enemy', they also have 'a distinction of purpose' in the sense that 'the state adjudicated temporal matters under God' while 'the church adjudicated [the doctrinal] and spiritual matters under God'.<sup>55</sup> The church helps social communication within politics in its own spiritual way and the government protects the spiritual communication of the church in its own social way.<sup>56</sup> In line with this,

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<sup>49</sup> *Sermons on Ephesians*. 5:18-21, pp.561-62.

<sup>50</sup> Hancock, *the Foundation of Politics*, p.30; *Inst.* (1536), Ch 6.37; 4.20.3.

<sup>51</sup> Hancock, *the Foundation of Politics*, pp.25-27.

<sup>52</sup> The theory of two governments goes back to Seneca. He maintains that humanity belongs to two commonwealths, that is, a commonwealth of the civil state, and another larger commonwealth of society, which is composed of all rational beings. The solidarity of the larger community is not legal or political solidarity but a moral or religious solidarity. See Sabine George H. and Thorson, Thomas L. *A History of Political Theory*, (Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden Press, 1973), p.172.

<sup>53</sup> Billings, "Participation", pp.233-34. See also Noelliste, "Calvin's Socio-Political Ethics", p.227.

<sup>54</sup> Refers to *Les Actes de la journée imperiale de Ratisbonne*, CO 5:673-674, 'if this doctrine [of the Papacy] is to be accepted by people...it is thus clear that those who have given this advice to Princes and rulers, to draw back and postpone the process of reform, do not care about God's honour nor of the salvation of churches, nor of the common good of the entire country [*ne de l'honneur de Dieu, ne du salut des Eglises, ne du bien public du pays*], but they [the Papacy] are so caught up with their greedy desires'. [My translation.]

<sup>55</sup> G. Joseph Gatis, "The Political Theory of John Calvin", *BS* 153 (1996), pp.449-53.

<sup>56</sup> 4.20.5. Calvin teaches that 'Isaiah, when he promises that kings shall be foster fathers of the church, and queens its nurses [Isa. 49:23], does not deprive them of their honour. Rather, by a noble title he makes them defenders of God's pious worshipers...he [Paul] entrusts the condition of the church to their [kings'] protection and care'; CO 5:626, 'wise rulers must order once again that the true and pure doctrine of Christ be taught in schools in order that the uncorrupted truth can be communicated to pastors. Moreover, as we will need a large number of pastors, poor students in every region should be financially supported from the public purse [*bien publique*] [by civil



Hesselink stresses that the ultimate purpose of the political function of the Law is the re-establishment of God's order.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Calvin believes that state politics under God's design are 'the only remedy by which mankind can be preserved from destruction' after the Fall, both by providing 'the tranquillity of the good' and by restraining 'the waywardness of the wicked'. Moreover, the state has educational and philanthropic goals, such as 'to erect schools and to furnish emoluments for the teachers', and to 'build houses for the poor and for travellers'.<sup>58</sup>

Here, it is worth noting that Calvin's understanding of the twofold office of government differs from Aquinas' ideas on the political common good. Unlike Calvin, Aquinas believes that both the eternal law of philosophical truth and the divine law of religious truth are partly dissolved into natural law, which is placed within human reason.<sup>59</sup> For this reason, 'some common ruling power' in the state can direct 'the activities of individuals with a view to the common good'.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, as Wallace points out, Aquinas regarded the state as 'the reasonable product of human nature', which has 'a sphere which [is] peculiarly its own'.<sup>61</sup> Thus, Aquinas suggests that this natural law 'is concerned primarily with the common good' according to the command of reason.<sup>62</sup> Accordingly, one can say that, for Aquinas, the state 'has at its disposal all the means necessary for the attainment of its end, the *bonum commune* or common good of the citizens' through the harmonious cooperation between seeking 'the common good of the multitude' and seeking 'one's own good'.<sup>63</sup> In other words, Aquinas believes that the state, without the guidance of the church and by its own wisdom and worldly resources, can find 'its own way' to restore the original order, that is, 'a common social life of many individuals'.<sup>64</sup>

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government]. These students, after they have learnt the doctrines of Christianity, can be ordained into the Church...Rulers should spare no effort in ensuring that schools flourish and the doctrine of salvation be spread'. [My translation.]

<sup>57</sup> Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of the Law*, pp.247, 249; 4.20.3; OS 5:474.

<sup>58</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 13:3; CO 37:211, quoted in Niesel, *Calvin*, p.234.

<sup>59</sup> Here, one ought to remember that, for Aristotle, the natural end of man is sufficient and attained through the state, whilst, for Aquinas, the supernatural end of man is attained through the church. See Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol. II*, pp.412-13.

<sup>60</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol. II*, p.414.

<sup>61</sup> Wallace, *Geneva*, p.111.

<sup>62</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol. II*, p.417.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp.415, 418; S.T., Ia, IIae, 90, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Wallace, *Geneva*, pp.111-12; Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol. II*, p.414; S.T., Ia, 96, 4.

On the other hand, Calvin classifies the value of the political common good in terms of the secular state and the Christian state. In the *Institutes* (1559) book 2, he writes that the civil government belonging to common grace (remaining after the Fall) is placed outside the kingdom of Christ.<sup>65</sup> However, in the *Institutes* (1559) book 4, he maintains that the civil government not only receives God's common grace, but is also provided with His special grace through the church. As Oberman states, 'God's concern is not only the rule of the hearts of the faithful, but also, in wider scope, the rule of the whole earth'; that is, 'not only through intra-ecclesial evolution, but through God's extra-ecclesial intervention as well'.<sup>66</sup> Accordingly, as Gatis points out, for Calvin, 'both [church and state] is to be religious', and his vision is to build 'a religious republic', understood as 'God's rule by God's law', through the distinctive interaction between church and state.<sup>67</sup> Thus, it appears that Calvin has a twofold understanding of the state; as a secular state in book 2 and as a Christian state in book 4. The secular state can be understood only in terms of the simple dimension of the common good of humankind, but the Christian state can be understood in terms of the dynamic 'mutual aid and collaboration' <sup>68</sup> between the ecclesial common good and the social common good. Thus, by book 4 of the *Institutes* (1559), Calvin is describing church and state together as 'the external means or aims by which God invites us into the society of Christ and holds us therein'.<sup>69</sup>

### **Vivification and mortification in the public sphere**

In Calvin's theology of the political common good, the mutual relation between spiritual welfare and social welfare is expressed by the double image of positive vivification and negative mortification. Although Calvin does not explicitly use the term 'vivification' or 'mortification' to show the coercive power of the state, once a close investigation of his statement regarding civil order is carried out, these notions can be

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<sup>65</sup> Palmer cites Werner Krusche's argument that the rule of the Christ extends only to the church. See Timothy Palmer, "John Calvin's View of the Kingdom of God", PhD. diss. (University of Aberdeen, 1988), p.288.

<sup>66</sup> For Heiko Oberman, it is obvious that the rule of the Christ obtains '*etiam extra ecclesiam*'. In *Dawn of the Reformation: Essay in the Medieval and Early Reformed Thought*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark LTD, 1986), 238-239. See also Heiko Oberman, "The 'Extra' Dimension in the Theology of Calvin", *JEH* 21.1 (1970), pp.43ff.

<sup>67</sup> Gatis, "The Political Theory of John Calvin", pp.449, 452.

<sup>68</sup> Wendel, *Calvin*, p.79.

<sup>69</sup> See J.J. Steenkamp, "Calvin on the "State" in the *Institutes*", in *John Calvin's Institutes: His Opus Magnum*, (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University, 1986), p.357.

implied. First, regarding the positive image of vivification, Calvin believes that ‘the city authorities themselves had to be encouraged to think of their work in government as involving a social care for the welfare of each individual corresponding to the pastoral care exerted by the ministry of the Word’.<sup>70</sup> In contrast, the mutual relation between church and state is expressed by the negative image of mortification: ‘as the magistrate ought by punishment and physical restraint to cleanse the church of offenses, so the minister of the Word should help the magistrate in order that fewer may sin’.<sup>71</sup>

Consequently, one can say that Calvin’s concern in Geneva is the pursuit of the restoration of communal order and harmony based on willing obedience to God’s law: as Wallace states, ‘the Church had its spiritual independence restored to it, and civil government was allowed to retain its full power over every decision proper to its own sphere’.<sup>72</sup> Within their interrelationship, the ecclesial common good relates to salvation and the political common good relates to the maintenance of the social order; these are not to be confused (as in the case of a theocracy)<sup>73</sup> but are inseparable and joined together for all members’ wellbeing.<sup>74</sup> The common good of the church coextensive with the common good of the society is Calvin’s vision for Geneva and for humankind. Here, it is inferred once again that, in Calvin’s political theology, the concept of ‘public’ is not only related to ‘a governmental matter’, managed by an office-holder, but is also related to communal

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<sup>70</sup> Wallace, *Geneva*, p.125.

<sup>71</sup> Kelly, *Emergency of Liberty*, p.15, quoted in David. Hall, “Calvin on Human Government and the State” in *Theological Guide to Calvin’s Institutes*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), p.434. Regarding this, see Graham, “Church and Society”, pp.276-289.

<sup>72</sup> Wallace, *Geneva*, p.113. Regarding the impact of the mutual relation between church and state to the spread of Calvinism, see T. M. Parker, *Christianity and the State in the Light of History*, (London: A. & C. Black, 1955), p.160.

<sup>73</sup> However, as Leith re-defines, ‘The term “theocracy” is also applicable to Calvin’s purpose in Geneva if it means the reign of God through Jesus Christ in the whole of society...Church and state should work together under a common Lord and for a common purpose’. See Leith, *The Christian Life*, p.201.

<sup>74</sup> Naphy refutes claims that Calvin is an oppressive theocratic activist. The pastors in Geneva focused on religious matters, and did not ask secular magistrates for the help of the sword: William Naphy, *Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1610: A Collection of Documents*, eds. Alistair Duke, Gillian Lewis, and Andrew Pettegree (Manchester University Press, 1992), p.15. In relation to this, Selderhuis rightly states that ‘in Geneva, as in other cities of that time, the agenda was not so much to impose a particular religion on the population but rather to promote unity among the people, which would also contribute to their economic and social welfare’. See Herman Selderhuis, *John Calvin, A Pilgrim’s Life*, (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), p.128.

matters, formed by the people themselves. For Calvin always ‘connects the concept of public to the common good for the whole society and the good of the common people’.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, according to Calvin, the power given to the civil government should be carried out in a twofold mode in terms of the common good to inculcate good deeds and to restrain and punish wicked deeds by those through which ‘the public peace is troubled and disturbed [cf. Rom. 13:3]’.<sup>76</sup> This twofold mode seems to be similar to that of vivification and mortification in the believer’s sanctification and to extend beyond this criterion is an abuse of public power. Thus, it appears that, for Calvin, the office of public leaders for the common good is performed by both the positive use of power for justice and the negative use of power for equity: ‘Justice, indeed, is to receive into safekeeping, to embrace, to protect, vindicate, and free, the innocent. But judgment is to withstand the boldness of the impious, to repress their violence, to punish their misdeeds’.<sup>77</sup>

In this context, it is crucial to link Calvin’s understanding of the rigorous fairness of the public criteria of state power with his theology of calling. According to Marshall, the core argument in Calvin’s theology of calling rests on his emphasis on equality, *coram Deo*, as the foundation of mutual support and service by all works and institutions within political, economical, and social areas.<sup>78</sup> Thus, for Calvin, governors, who receive the divine calling to pursue ‘the common good’ (*commune bonum*),<sup>79</sup> should apply strictly the public standard, not only to the governed<sup>80</sup> but also to themselves:

There are limits prescribed by God to their power, within which they ought to be satisfied: namely, to work for the common good and to govern and direct the

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<sup>75</sup> Yi, “Calvin’s Democratic Republicanism”, p.13. Regarding the concept of the public, see Geuss, *Public Goods, Private Goods*, pp.42-43.

<sup>76</sup> *Inst.* (1536), Ch 6.43, p.291.

<sup>77</sup> *Inst.* (1536), Ch 6.43, p.292.

<sup>78</sup> Paul Marshall, “Calvin, Politics, and Political Science”, p.151.

<sup>79</sup> *Comm. Psalms.* 82:1, pp.328-29; CO 31:768

<sup>80</sup> 4.20.16, Calvin, for instance, stresses that ‘in drought, in pestilence, unless greater severity is used, everything will go to ruin. There are nations inclined to a particular vice, unless it be most sharply repressed. How malicious and hateful toward public welfare [*bien public, publico bono*] would a man be who is offended by such diversity, which is perfectly adapted to maintain the observance of God’s law?’, CO 4:1146, OS 5:489. See also 4.20.20, ‘yet this equity and moderateness of their [believers’] minds will not prevent them from using the help of the magistrate in preserving their own possessions, while maintaining friendliness toward their enemies; or zealous for public welfare [*pour l’affection du bien public, aut publici boni*], from demanding the punishment of a guilty and pestilent man, who they know, can be changed only by death’, CO 4:1149-1150; OS 5:492.

people in truest fairness and justice; not to be puffed up with their own importance, but to remember that they also are subjects of God.<sup>81</sup>

With this in mind, one can say that Calvin's main concern regarding the judicial process lies in the protection of the judicial right of citizens in civil cases for the social common good, that is, 'for our good [*bonum nostrum*]'.<sup>82</sup> Regarding believers' motivation for litigation in the law courts, Calvin stresses that 'when we hear that the help of the magistrate is a holy gift of God, we must more diligently guard against its becoming polluted by our fault'.<sup>83</sup> Calvin clearly commands magistrates and believers that they should be aware of the abuse of private interests such as 'a mad desire to harm' or 'returning evil for evil'. Instead, they should treat their adversary with love, good will, and moderation for the protection of the public good.<sup>84</sup>

### **The circulation of political gifts**

For Calvin, the concept of 'public expense'<sup>85</sup> can be regarded as an exchange of political gifts between the governed and the governors on account of their good use of state coercive enforcement for the public interest: these public expenses, such as tribute, taxes, and the undertaking of (military) public duties for the common defence, are demonstrations of civil obedience.<sup>86</sup> Calvin's statement that 'they [the subjects] are not

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<sup>81</sup> Quoted in David Hall, "John Calvin on Human Government and the State", p.426, quotations are from the translation of Calvin's Sermon on 1 Samuel. 8 by Douglass Kelly in *Calvin Studies Colloquium*, ed. Charles Raynal and John Leith (Davidson, NC: Davidson College Presbyterian Church, 1982), p.66.

<sup>82</sup> 4.20.19.

<sup>83</sup> 4.20.18.

<sup>84</sup> *Inst.* (1536), Ch 6.51; 4.20.18.

<sup>85</sup> *Inst.* (1536), Ch 6.46.

<sup>86</sup> 4.20.13, CO 4:1142, OS 5:485, 'David, Hezekiah...were able to live an opulent lifestyle that was in keeping with the position that they occupied, paid for out of public funds, without this being seen as unseemly...However, this should serve as a reminder to Princes that their kingdoms are not simply sources of income for their own private use, but rather should be used for the common good of all the people [*au bien publique de tout le peuple, totius populi aeraria*], as Saint Paul states (Romans 13:6)', [my translation]; *Inst.* (1536), Ch 6.52; Calvin also utilizes the case of Cornelius, a Centurion in Acts 10, to defend the limited necessity of just war by refuting the opposition from Anabaptists: 'Although he [Cornelius] receives the Holy Spirit, it is obvious he does not give up his military profession...we should not condemn the act of bearing arms in itself under the authority of a Prince for the defence of a country as long as the Prince is concerned only with the common good of his country [*bien commun de son pays*]...However, we must attack the evil jealousies and greediness that cause war....and other bad deeds that are committed in time of war' [my translation], CO 7:80. However, Calvin does not also overlook the potential for the abuse of just war by stating that 'you have a country, and a Prince or a King who goes to war, seemingly for the common good [*il semble que ce soit pour le bien commun*], and efforts will be made to have us

pretending subjection, but are sincerely and heartily subjects’<sup>87</sup> corresponds to their expectation towards the governor, who rightly realizes the public good<sup>88</sup> by his setting forth of ‘a well-ordered administration of a commonwealth’.<sup>89</sup>

However, if the virtuous political relationship that exists between the magistrate and the people for the common good is broken through the replacement of exemplary government by misgovernment,<sup>90</sup> citizens may return to their ruler the ‘bad money’ of their resistance by driving out the ‘good money’ of their ‘willing acknowledgment and full

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believe this. However, the poor citizens, after having had to pay land tax, tributes and so many other taxes in order to pay for the war, will be exploited even more, in fact, the enemy will be no more exploited than those in whose name the war has been carried out’, [my translation], CO 26:13-14.

<sup>87</sup> Calvin teaches that ‘we pray and exhort you to settle the quarrels...not only in your external persons but also within freedom of conscience. By so doing, you ensure all is properly-ordered, thus honouring God, protecting the public interest [*bien publique*], avoiding disaster and denying the enemies of the true Christian religion any opportunity to delight in the problems and divisions amongst you’, [my translation], CO 10.2:134. Related to this sincerity, Calvin, in *Confession de foy de Geneve*, teaches similarly that ‘all Christians are to pray to God for the prosperity of their leaders and lords of the area where they live, obey their status and laws as long as they do not run counter to God’s commandants, seek to promote goodness, order, and all that is in the general public interest [*procurer le bien, la tranquillité et utilité publique*], [my translation], CO 9:700 and CO 22:96.

<sup>88</sup> 4.20.23. Nevertheless, Calvin also bears in mind the fact that the common good can be realized not only by good political leaders but also by bad political leaders when he teaches that ‘even the worst tyrants do some good and are of some use to the world...God still reigns in evil people, to the extent that even though they are in positions of leadership and power, they are nevertheless servants of the common good [*ils soyent neantmoins serviteurs du bien commun*]. Those who perform their duties faithfully, as any good Magistrate should do, should know that God has put them in this position for that purpose and they should dedicate themselves to serving the people’, [my translation], CO 49:731, *Sermons on 1 Corinthians*. 11:4-10.

<sup>89</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 13:3.

<sup>90</sup> CO 42:39-40, Calvin’s *Sermons on Daniel*. 14:2-30, ‘the appointments of God [*les ordonnances de Dieu*]...are debased by evil people...who take away what the ordinary people need to live on. What else should princes and Kings be but fathers to the common people, having a paternal affection for their subjects, being careful to govern well those whom God has put into their care, being fair and righteous? But there is nothing but cruelty, and in this we see how men twist the states of law that God dedicated to his honour and to the common good [*les estats que Dieu avoit dedies à son honneur et au bien commun*]...Not only do we see this ungratefulness and disloyalty in Kingdoms and in the judiciary, but also in church governance...by the Papacy’, [my translation]; CO 34:137, *Sermons on the book of Job*. 19:26-29, ‘People [magistrates] who are ruled by their emotions will have no hesitation about openly disrespecting God...They say...‘There’s something that could be beneficial to the Church, something that could be good for the wider public, that’s in the public interest [*voilà une chose qui pouvait estre à l’edification de l’Eglise, qui pouvoit servir à communauté des hommes, au bien public*], I’ll ruin the whole thing then.’...they are so dedicated to overturning good and safeguarding evil’. [My translation.]

obedience’.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, for Calvin, the rearrangement of political goods is carried out not by private resistance but by public resistance. However, he suggests that citizens should give ‘public obedience’ not only to ‘those who rule for the public benefit’ but also to those ‘who rule unjustly and incompetently’,<sup>92</sup> since God sets them all up as ‘true patterns and evidences’ of divine beneficence in order ‘to punish the wickedness of the people’.<sup>93</sup> With this assumption in mind, Calvin proposes that a limited and passive right of resistance can be carried out by public ‘magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the willfulness of kings’, when rulers, designated (through divine calling) for the welfare of peoples,<sup>94</sup> indulge instead in self-interest and ‘fierce licentiousness’.<sup>95</sup> Calvin’s understanding of the right of rebellion leads one to suggest that both the maintenance of the public good and its recovery should always be carried out in a public way. His insistence on passive resistance is related both to his aversion to the destructive forces of chaos and war and also to his political insight that active but reckless resistance by private instigation actually produced ‘much bloodshed but little result’.<sup>96</sup>

A more fundamental reason for preferring disciplined resistance through the so-called lower magistrate is found in Calvin’s theology. First of all, for Calvin, the right of rebellion must be located within humanity’s obedience to God’s sovereignty over earthly rulers.<sup>97</sup> From this perspective, Calvin attempts to answer questions on the bearing of

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<sup>91</sup> Noelliste, “Calvin’s Socio-Political Ethics”, p.226; CO 53:305, *Sermons on 1 Timothy*. 3:14-15, ‘they [magistrates] are without authority and they can be quite rightly mocked. They may make occasional shows of boldness, but they never last. Even if they are the boldest people in the world, they lack seriousness of the kind that will allow doctrines to be well-received. This is all the more reason why those who are called to this position must strive to serve God and the common good [*bien commun*] faithfully and well. This demonstrates how ashamed we should be of our state’. [My translation.]

<sup>92</sup> 4.20.22, ‘You may find some who very respectfully yield themselves to their magistrates and desire somebody whom they can obey, because they know that such is expedient for public welfare [*pour le bien public, bono publico*]’, CO 4:1151; OS 5:493.

<sup>93</sup> 4.20.24-25 and 31; also Comm. *Jeremiah*. 27:7; Comm. *Romans*. 13:1; CO 49:249. As politics itself is the gift of grace given by God’s providence, the basics of even the tyranny is recognized as ‘in some respect’ being assistant ‘in consolidating the society of men’, Comm. *Romans*. 13:3.

<sup>94</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 13:4, p.479.

<sup>95</sup> 4.20.31.

<sup>96</sup> See Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, pp.246-47.

<sup>97</sup> 4.20.25-28, ‘Those who rule for the public benefit [*publico bono*] are true patterns and evidences of this beneficence of his [God’s] [*bien publique, sont vrais miroirs et comme exemplaires de sa bonte*]; that they who rule unjustly and incompetently have been raised up by him [God] to punish the wickedness of the people; that all equally have been endowed with the holy majesty with which he has invested lawful power’, 4.20.25, p.1512, CO 4:1154, OS 5:496.

suffering, adversity, and evil rule.<sup>98</sup> Also, for Calvin, the political right of resistance takes place within the wider context of the spiritual exercise of participation within the Christian endurance of hardship.<sup>99</sup> Since the ‘evil conduct of a mean ruler’ can be used as ‘divine chastisement’ for the correction of ‘one’s own misdeeds’, it may contribute to the permanent restoration of sinners’ spiritual goodness, regardless of any temporal loss of their political interest.<sup>100</sup>

However, Calvin’s statement on passive resistance to political oppression does not apply in the case of rulers’ direct damage to the religious common good. In this case, Calvin suggests a more aggressive right of rebellion.<sup>101</sup> This is because, for Calvin, the spiritual common good of the church (which is related to the core of God’s truth) has absolute value, and is not comparable to the contingent character of secular political authority. For this, Calvin contrasts Daniel’s spiritual obedience to God through political disobedience with the Israelites’ spiritual disobedience to God through their political submission to king ‘Jeroboam’.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, if rulers make a spiritual assault against God’s honour and actively vandalise the spiritual common good of the church through ‘the imposition of idolatry – which could take the forms of compulsory attendance at, or the reintroduction of, the Mass or processions – [this] [is] the point at which Christians may, or rather must, resist’. For, in this case, the divine legitimacy of rulers has been removed.<sup>103</sup> In sum, for Calvin, public resistance in a restrained manner, unlike disorderly private resistance, can work towards the protection and restoration of public value.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> It is assumed that this is the main reason Calvin does not state a preference for a particular polity as the principal basis for his political thoughts.

<sup>99</sup> Comm. *Romans*. 13:1 and 8; Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, pp.246-47.

<sup>100</sup> 4.20.29; Noelliste, “Calvin’s Socio-Political Ethics”, p.227.

<sup>101</sup> CO 18:426, Calvin writes a letter to Coligny in 1561 that ‘however, there was much lamenting at the inhumanity being used to abolish Religion. From one minute to the next a horrible massacre was forecast, one that would kill all the unfortunate believers. I replied....if a single drop of blood was shed, rivers of blood would flow all over Europe. It would therefore be better that each one of us die a hundred times than for us to cause the reputation of Christianity and the Gospel to be exposed to dishonour. I agreed with him that if a ‘Prince of the blood’ needed to be upheld as the authority or ruler for the common good [*en leur droit pour le bien commun*], and if the Parliament agreed with them in this, that it would be legitimate for all good subjects to come to their assistance’. [My translation.]

<sup>102</sup> 4.20.32.

<sup>103</sup> See Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, p.247. However, Calvin does not recognize iconoclasm as being desirable for the restoration of the public good of the church, and does not include it in the list of things that lead to the active right of resistance, since it is thought ‘to pillage what does not belong to any individual, but is public property’ from thoughtless zeal (p.248).

<sup>104</sup> 4.20.22.



## The new role of the common good within discussion on polity

In his commentary on I Peter in 1551, Calvin's political theology gives central focus to the necessity of politics 'for the common good of humankind' whilst not basing it on the discourse of any preferred polity: 'why it behoves us reverently to regard and to respect civil authority...because it has been appointed by the Lord for the common good of mankind [*commune bonum humani generis*]; for we must be extremely barbarous and brutal, if the public good [*publica utilitas*] is not regarded by us'.<sup>105</sup> Accordingly, chaotic anarchism, that is, the substantial dissolution of civil society would be worse than the tyranny of absolute monarchs indulging in their own private interest.<sup>106</sup>

Moreover, Calvin's intention is undoubtedly to find the most appropriate polity for realizing both the equality of the divine calling and the willing mutual service for the common good.<sup>107</sup> As Höpfl notes, Calvin believes that the council amongst 'a *compagnie* of people' is essential since 'one man could not have power and breadth of vision enough to govern [by himself]'.<sup>108</sup> In a similar vein, Stevenson articulates that Calvin's vision of good government is founded on the assumption of 'some built-in, institutional and intra-governmental checks on the exercise of power', its being 'modest in the appearance and operation', and its acknowledgment of rulers as being called to administer according to their diversity of gifts of divine grace for the edification of the church.<sup>109</sup> Thus, Calvin contends that 'a system that combines aristocracy and democracy', as 'a controlled and regulated kind of popular participation',<sup>110</sup> is the best polity. For, it enables people to enjoy greater freedom and happiness – the main components for the common good of the whole community. In addition, this polity is based upon the mutual balance, aid, and check 'so that they may help one another, teach and admonish one another',<sup>111</sup> as in the case of the mutuality of the collegial ministry found in the church office, as discussed in Chapter Five.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Comm. *I Peter*. 2:14; CO 55:245.

<sup>106</sup> Comm. *Daniel*. 4:10.

<sup>107</sup> Marshall, 'aristocracy, or aristocracy tempered by democracy' in "Calvin, Politics, and Political Science", p.157.

<sup>108</sup> Höpfl, *Polity*, pp.162, 164.

<sup>109</sup> Stevenson, *Sovereign Grace*, pp.94-95.

<sup>110</sup> Höpfl, *Polity*, p.159.

<sup>111</sup> 4.20.8; OS 5:478-479.

<sup>112</sup> Noelliste, "Calvin's Socio-Political Ethics", p.226.

Now, what one ought to remember is the assumption that, in Calvin's political thought, 'the common good' or 'the public good' takes a superior value while the polity is a sub-value. In other words, Calvin's main concern lies not in the form of government but in God's purpose for government and in humanity's responsibility in its administration. Thus, one cannot say that only a particular type of government is suitable for the common welfare of all humankind. Rather, Calvin's concern can be correctly articulated by the fact that any form of government, for instance, the monarchy,<sup>113</sup> can be viewed positively when it contributes towards the political common good. On the other hand, when the monarchy is (mis)used so that it compromises the political common good, it can also be described as negative; therefore, one should not attempt to understand Calvin's main position as being either in favour of or against the polity of the monarchy itself.

This then leads to another debate as to whether Calvin is an aristocratic republican or a democratic republican.<sup>114</sup> Frequently, Calvin's republicanism has been understood as being closer to the aristocratic model. However, Calvin is concerned with the universal potentiality of human reason as the substantial image of God, which has a role more for the political arena than for the selection of polity.<sup>115</sup> Calvin merely attempts to articulate what form of government is the most appropriate model for his generation's public good, given that he is 'motivated by the requirements of his work in Geneva and influenced by the nature of his time'.<sup>116</sup>

This then means that Calvin's unchangeable and essential position throughout this period is based upon humanity's ability, as social animals with political reason, to participate correctly in God's public calling. Thus, Stevenson argues that, in Calvin's political thought, 'the distinction between private person and public person thus seems a thin one'.<sup>117</sup> One can say, therefore, that not only can a ruler be regarded as a private individual, and as a being 'despoiled of his honour' when he does not follow the public order 'beyond

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<sup>113</sup> Höpfl, *the Christian Polity*, p.153.

<sup>114</sup> According to Partee, 'McNeil emphasizes the democratic elements in Calvin' but 'Bohatec reads Calvin's preference for aristocracy'. In *The Theology of John Calvin*, pp.291-92.

<sup>115</sup> Ake Berbe, "Reason in Luther, Calvin and Sidney", *SCJ* 23.1 (1992), pp.120-21; see also Calvin 2.2.17; 2.2.24.

<sup>116</sup> Noelliste, "Calvin's Socio-Political Ethics", p.225.

<sup>117</sup> Stevenson, *Sovereign Grace*, p.35.

his bounds in his office',<sup>118</sup> but also that 'commoners' can be regarded as participators in public office when God's commissioning for the public order is given to them.<sup>119</sup>

In addition, Calvin's commentary on Isaiah explicitly articulates that the primary criteria of public office are set up according to whether one 'was endued with the Spirit of God'.<sup>120</sup> One may therefore show the 'anointing' of the Spirit by one's ability 'which the calling demands' and 'the gifts which are necessary for that office' when one 'discharges a public office', not in order to be 'regarded as a private individual' but so as to be judged as having been sent and appointed by God.<sup>121</sup> In a similar vein, Höpfl points out that 'if anyone had somehow got his hands on *potentia* [he] became *ipso facto* a public man and entitled to obedience, for all is in the hands of God'.<sup>122</sup> In other words, as Yi notes, it could be contended that, in terms of Calvin's political thought aimed towards the common good, 'whether one has a public mind and public virtue' is more central than 'whether a man holds a public office'.<sup>123</sup> Thus, in terms of the collegial participation by the highly qualified for the good of most of the people within his own historical background, Calvin prefers aristocracy, or a system that combines aristocracy and democracy, as the most positive structure for the proper realization of the public mind.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, it is desirable that the debate on Calvin's preference between aristocratic republicanism and democratic republicanism should be harmoniously approached in a way that interprets it by the higher angle of common-good-centred republicanism.

Consequently, one can state that Calvin focuses on the realization of the social common good through the role of the state related to the church, as is systematically shown in book 4 of the *Institutes* (1559), rather than on the independence of the common

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<sup>118</sup> Comm. *Acts*. 5:29; CO 48:109.

<sup>119</sup> Comm. *Acts*. 5:29; CO 48:109, quoted in Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political thought: The Age of Reformation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.220. Skinner argues that Calvin implies that private persons and the common populace could resist tyranny without resisting God.

<sup>120</sup> Comm. *Isaiah*. 61:1, pp.303-4.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Höpfl, *the Christian Polity*, p.171.

<sup>123</sup> Yi, "Calvin's Democratic Republicanism", p.19. See *Annales Calviniani* of 1561, 'John Calvin, Minister of the word of God, spoke of the need to elect people who were capable of performing the role of chief magistrate [*Sindique*] effectively, people who were God-fearing and who had the honour and glory of God and the public interest [*le bien public*] at heart', [my translation], CO 21:743.

<sup>124</sup> Comm. *Micah*. 5:3; CO 43:374.

good of humankind in itself, as shown in book 2. Namely, in Calvin's political thought, there exists a different angle about the secular state, which can be referred to only in terms of the common good of humankind in itself, without any direct relation to the common good of the church. Nevertheless, Calvin's main interest is to show that the realization of the social common good of humankind is activated by believers' participation in the interdependent partnership between church and state.

In conclusion, Calvin's attention to the nature of politics as divine gift given for the common good has been examined through a comparison of his early humanistic and later biblical stance. Regarding the former, Calvin focuses on the political virtue of 'clemency' at both individual and communal levels, and also attends to the best form of policy in terms of the common good. Regarding the latter, Calvin focuses on the edification and mutual communication of believers for the realization of God's original order both at the ecclesial and social level. The combination of spiritual and moral common good occurs through both ecclesial and state law, which are distinctive but inseparable. However, he still recognises the political, but secular, common good occurring outside Christian state law.

Calvin bears in mind that the civil government's social care and punishment activities can be considered as being vivifying and mortifying in a similar way to that of the church's own pastoral and disciplinary systems. This Appendix has shown that Calvin's understanding of public expenditure such as tax, punishment, and just war could be seen as being a modest and reasonable exchange of political gifts between the governed and governors in the public interest. The failure of the right exchange of these gifts leads to either active or passive public resistance, depending on whether it is a religious or secular failure. It has also been shown that Calvin prefers the combination of aristocracy and democracy as being the best polity for the protection of the common good by attending more to the character of the public mind within this combined system than to the form of polity itself.

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